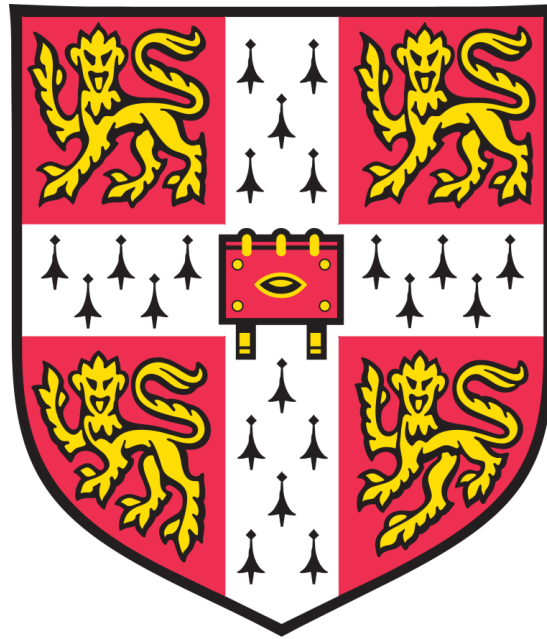


# Scalar politics: Sustainability planning under Localism and the delivery of London's Olympic legacy

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## **Abstract**

### **Scalar politics: Sustainability planning under Localism and the delivery of London's Olympic legacy**

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This thesis seeks to address a research gap concerning the relationship between the Localism Act 2011 and planning's central purpose of achieving sustainable development. In addition it uses a physical example in urban space to illustrate the main arguments, and in doing so adds to the growing literature on the various outcomes since the Localism Act was enforced across England in 2011. The thesis asks four inter-related questions: Firstly, regarding the theoretical bases of sustainability and localism from the various ontologies of 'scale' and 'the natural'; secondly, regarding the general conflicting assumptions within localism and sustainable development; thirdly, regarding the ways in which sustainable development is inherently multi-scalar; and lastly how our case study example highlights the need for policy-makers to examine the often overlooked trade-offs which exist in normative sustainable development models. The thesis also demonstrates the role that site-specific research can play in grounding theoretical and policy discussions.

The research is situated in the rapidly changing sub-region of East London, particularly in the shadow of the 2012 Olympic regeneration of Stratford and the Borough of Newham. We take the example of a failed upgrade due the Localism Act, of a multi-scalar and multi-functional 'Greenway' to consider the relationship between localism and sustainable urbanism in the context neo-liberalism. Methods comprise site-based analysis in the form of walking, photography and note-taking, the analysis of national, metropolitan and local planning documents, as well as interviews with officials related to policy and design in the area and local residents.

The research finds that national and metropolitan conceptions of sustainable development are weighted differently to those at local scales. In addition the Localism Act exacerbates planning capacities between Local Authorities and the communities they serve. There are some opportunities for neighbourhood planning but these are dependent on local capacities, widening already-existing socio-spatial inequalities. The thesis concludes by destabilising the widely used idea of sustainable development as a 'balance' between social, economic and environmental needs. Viewing sustainability through a scalar lens, in our case using a physical site and the policy of Localism, we are able to reveal the material differences between sustainable development agendas which have been criticised for masking over conflict in a post-political manner for the continuation of 'status quo' economic development trajectories.

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Andrew Hoolachan

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Sustainable urban planning and localism

Urban planning as both a professional and academic endeavour contains multiple theories on how to govern, manage and plan for society, space and place. This thesis is concerned with two dominant schools of thought in contemporary planning: localism and sustainable urbanism. It has been argued that cities have become sites where the greatest mitigation against global environmental change can take place as they contain more than half the world's population and the majority of the world's gross domestic product, production and consumption.<sup>1</sup> With high rates of urbanisation set to continue for the foreseeable future<sup>2</sup>, it has been argued that we must instigate the right kinds of urban planning now in order to avoid the kinds of physical development that exacerbates carbon intensive urbanism. Once they are built, new urban areas are highly resistant to changes in their basic morphology or structure for a generation at least and the form, structure and design of cities is known to be a factor in how sustainable they can be.<sup>3</sup> If urbanisation is unstoppable, it is therefore vital that we design our cities in ways that lock-in measures for the next generation that will help to mitigate global environment change. In short, the environmental future we want must be planned and designed for now in our cities. As the UN states "As the world continues to urbanize, sustainable development challenges will be increasingly concentrated in cities".<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, politics is changing rapidly and western democracies are moving away from big and distant governments normally able to undertake grand planning, towards small government and local decision-making. This has been happening since the 1970s and has been associated with neo-liberalism and its processes of state re-scaling.<sup>5</sup> Globalisation has played a central role in this shift, from neo-liberal ideologues pressing for a smaller state, to anti-globalists who promote local distinctiveness and local democracy as counterweights against a homogenised world.<sup>6</sup> In urban planning, the concept of localism advocates more localised decision-making, which generally comes

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, *Better Growth, Better Climate* (Washington, DC, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: Highlights* (New York, 2014), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: Highlights*, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Neil Brenner, 'The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration', *Progress in Human Geography*, 25.4 (2001), 591–614; Alice Cohen and James McCarthy, 'Reviewing Rescaling: Strengthening the Case for Environmental Considerations', *Progress in Human Geography*, 39.1 (2015), 3–25; Giles Mohan, 'The Convergence Around Local Civil Society and the Dangers of Localism', *Social Scientist*, 29.11 (2001), 3–24.

<sup>6</sup> Fred Curtis, 'Eco-Localism and Sustainability', *Ecological Economics*, 46 (2003), 83–102; DCLG, *The Plain English Guide to the Localism Act* (London, 2011).

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within a context of decentralisation of central government services, a focus on community empowerment, or new tiers of governance at smaller scales.<sup>7</sup>

Localism and sustainable urbanism can both be found in national or federal planning frameworks in various countries around the world and in England today both are dominant in planning policy (Planning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is devolved).<sup>8</sup> According to the foreword in the National Planning Policy Framework, “The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development”.<sup>9</sup> In addition the Liberal-Conservative coalition Government of 2010 to 2015 said that they would be the “greenest government ever”.<sup>10</sup> That Government also introduced the Localism Act 2011, which promoted local decision-making and abolished regional planning.<sup>11</sup> The Foreword to the *Plain English Guide to the Localism Act* by former Communities Minister, Greg Clarke, states: “The Localism Act sets out a series of measures with the potential to achieve a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. They include: new freedoms and flexibilities for local government; new rights and powers for communities and individuals; reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective; and reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally”.<sup>12</sup> Here, then, we have two planning theories sitting side-by-side within the same national planning system: sustainable development and localism. Within cities, we can use the more specific phrase, sustainable urbanism.

Taken individually, these two planning theories are not inherently problematic. However, strategic tensions arise when these two theories are simultaneously part of a unified planning system, and when they are justified as mutually compatible theories of planning.<sup>13</sup> It is often assumed for example, that localised socio-environmental processes such as local food production are inherently better at addressing global environmental change.<sup>14</sup> The same logic has been applied to governance, where efficiency and accountability benefits of more local governance are assumed to produce less wasteful and more nuanced approaches to managing local environments.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, local governments have in

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<sup>7</sup> Harriet Bulkeley, ‘Reconfiguring Environmental Governance: Towards a Politics of Scales and Networks’, *Political Geography*, 24.8 (2005), 875–902; Cohen and McCarthy.

<sup>8</sup> Scotland has also pursued a localism agenda with the adoption of its “Community Empowerment Act (2015)”. See: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/CommEmpowerBill>

<sup>9</sup> Crown Copyright, *National Planning Policy Framework* (London, 2012), p. i.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Cowell, ‘The Greenest Government Ever? Planning and Sustainability in England after the May 2010 Elections’, *Planning Practice and Research*, 28.1 (2013), 37–41.

<sup>11</sup> Nick Clarke and Allan Cochrane, ‘Geographies and Politics of Localism: The Localism of the United Kingdom’s Coalition Government’, *Political Geography*, 34 (2013), 10–23; Crown Copyright, ‘Localism Act 2011’, 2011 <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>> [accessed 3 September 2015].

<sup>12</sup> DCLG.

<sup>13</sup> Nick Gallent, Hamiduddin Iqbal and Mededdu Manuela, ‘Localism, Down-Scaling and the Strategic Planning Dilemmas Confronting Planning in England’, *Town Planning Review*, 84.5 (2013), 563–82.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Purcell, ‘Urban Democracy and the Local Trap’, *Urban Studies*, 43.11 (2006), 1921–41.

<sup>15</sup> John Sturzaker and Dave Shaw, ‘Localism in Practice: Lessons from a Pioneer Neighbourhood Plan in England’, *Town Planning Review*, 86.5 (2015), 587–609.

the past led the way in sustainable urban policies at the city-level from recycling to public transport innovations.<sup>16</sup>

The practical problems between localism and sustainable urbanism emerge when sustainability planning requires more-than-local co-ordination across multiple scales, whether it's a neighbouring authority, a national government or an international organisation. This is particularly true in complex urban regions which have socio-economies extending beyond one planning jurisdiction. If localism is promoted within a system of planning that also allows for cross-boundary support in the form of either a regional tier of governance or proper funding and support from national government, there is no reason why localism and sustainable development cannot be part of the same aim of shaping cities in a way that allows them to lock-in environmentally sound policies.<sup>17</sup> However, neither of these conditions exists under the Localism Act. The particular problem of localism in England is that it is occurring within a broader neo-liberal framework in which funding to local authorities has been dramatically cut, and regional planning has been abolished. This means that when it comes to sustainability planning, councils have less capacity to plan, and regional issues of planning integration, are relegated in favour of local issues.<sup>18</sup>

Localism in England has been developed in a specific political context making it a particular 'type' of localism and as we shall show later, there are many forms of localism.<sup>19</sup> Following the financial crash of 2008, the 2010 Coalition Government, which replaced the previous Labour Government, instigated an economic plan to reduce the national debt and narrow the deficit in part by slashing public services, known popularly as *austerity*. For local governments this meant a reduction in their basic allowance, the Revenue Grant Funding. Central government cuts to local authority budgets totalled 40% nationally between 2011 and 2015.<sup>20</sup> At the same time the Localism Act allowed councils to become more entrepreneurial by granting them a variety of powers over their budgets, through cutting business rates to attract businesses, and by granting them the *General Power of Competence*.<sup>21</sup> It also granted neighbourhood planning, which gave communities (as defined by local authorities) the right to challenge their local authority plans, and crucially, make their own neighbourhood plan.<sup>22</sup> In granting these powers while at the same time reducing funding, the Localism Act was argued by the

<sup>16</sup> Harriet Bulkeley and Vanesa Casta, 'A Survey of Urban Climate Change Experiments in 100 Cities', *Global Environmental Change*, 23 (2013), 92–102.

<sup>17</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.

<sup>18</sup> Cowell; Faye Scott, *Is Localism Delivering for Climate Change? Emerging Responses from Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Neighbourhood Plans* (London, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Philip Catney and others, 'Big Society, Little Justice? Community Renewable Energy and the Politics of Localism', *Local Environment*, 19.7 (2014), 715–30; Simin Davoudi and Ali Madanipour, 'Localism and Neo-Liberal Governmentality', *Town Planning Review*, 84.5 (2013), 551–62; P. Hildreth, 'What Is Localism, and What Implications Do Different Models Have for Managing the Local Economy?', *Local Economy*, 26.8 (2011), 702–14.

<sup>20</sup> Local Government Association, *Under Pressure - How Councils Are Planning for Future Cuts* (London, 2014), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> DCLG.

<sup>22</sup> DCLG.

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Government to make up in responsibilities and local powers, what austerity had taken away in cuts.<sup>23</sup> This has led to accusations that as local governments close or sell assets such as schools, libraries, community centres and leisure centres we are now witnessing the “death of municipal England”.<sup>24</sup>

This is, then, a typical neo-liberal approach to governing for space, where local governments are forced to be more financially accountable and responsible by central governments.<sup>25</sup> The effect can be a widening of capacities between and within local authorities to plan,<sup>26</sup> producing a more uneven geography of procedural and substantive socio-spatial justice.<sup>27</sup> Councils have lost the financial capability to support neighbourhood planning, and neighbourhood planning is far more subject to social and cultural capital for it to be effective.<sup>28</sup> In 2012 the Green Alliance think tank interviewed local authorities across England and found that 39% will cancel their sustainability plans due to lack of capacity.<sup>29</sup> This represents a step in the wrong direction given that all governments should be doing everything they can to address global environmental change, a point we will return to later.

Thus there are four major issues with localism in England today as it relates to sustainable development in general and sustainable urbanism in particular. Firstly, it claims to privilege a particular scale of governance - local authorities and their neighbourhoods - over regional socio-economic and environmental concerns. This is problematic as many scholars have argued sustainable planning requires multi-scalar planning, and the local is not inherently better at achieving this than any other scalar fix.<sup>30</sup> Secondly it exacerbates already-existing differences in planning capability at the local authority and neighbourhood level, which in turn increases variation in outcomes from place to place, raising the question of planning’s role in promoting socio-spatial justice. Thirdly, and feeding into the first issue, these differences may lead to the loss of essential cross-boundary perspectives on sustainable urban development, including such issues as housing location and densities, transport integration, or access to greenspaces.<sup>31</sup> Lastly, the Localism Act weakens planning’s regulatory controls on development so that environmental concerns are relegated in favour of economic growth, which as we shall see, is actually a *national* level agenda. The Localism Act has effectively reduced the power of local places to deal with competing development demands as it is a

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<sup>23</sup> Nick Bailey and Madeleine Pill, ‘Can the State Empower Communities through Localism? An Evaluation of Recent Approaches to Neighbourhood Governance in England’, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 33 (2015), 289–304.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Crewe, ‘The Strange Death of Municipal England’, *The London Review of Books*, 38.24 (2016), 6–10.

<sup>25</sup> Davoudi and Madanipour, ‘Localism and Neo-Liberal Governmentality’.

<sup>26</sup> Clarke and Cochrane; Jane Wills, ‘Emerging Geographies of English Localism: The Case of Neighbourhood Planning’, *Political Geography*, 53 (2016), 43–53.

<sup>27</sup> S. S. Fainstein, ‘Planning Theory and the City’, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 25.2 (2005), 121–30; Katarina Nylund, ‘Conceptions of Justice in the Planning of the New Urban Landscape – Recent Changes in the Comprehensive Planning Discourse in Malmö, Sweden’, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 15.1 (2014), 41–61.

<sup>28</sup> Wills.

<sup>29</sup> Faye Scott, *Is Localism Delivering for Climate Change? Emerging Responses from Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Neighbourhood Plans*.

<sup>30</sup> Purcell.

<sup>31</sup> Cowell.



textually ambiguous and pro-development plan and thus helps national government push its own ideological agenda rather than that of localities.<sup>32</sup>

These concerns have recently been articulated by Cohen and McCarthy,<sup>33</sup> Wills,<sup>34</sup> and Cowell,<sup>35</sup> among others.<sup>36</sup> Cohen and McCarthy make the general point that as states adopt re-scaling as part of neo-liberal agendas, attention must be paid to how environmental geographies are governed. They note that re-scaling often goes in three directions: scaling up to international organisations, scaling out to NGOs, quasi-governmental organisations, and special delivery vehicles, or scaling down to local governments. But too often physical geographies such as watersheds are ignored. As cities too are complex socio-technical and socio-ecological systems<sup>37</sup>, this reminds us then that working across borders matters if we are to govern for socio-natural assemblages such as urban areas. Dealing specifically with the Localism Act and sustainable urbanism in the UK, Cowell argues that localism poses risks to sustainable development. Analysing the National Planning Policy Framework and the broader context in which it was published, Cowell argues that localism has been couched in the language of empowerment but is rather a deliberate attempt to reduce risks to any kind of development by containing or reducing the environmental role of planning.<sup>38</sup> Wills presents findings from the first few years of localism to support the claims made above that the freedoms and empowerment of the Localism Act are skewed in favour of neighbourhoods with existing social and cultural capital and institutional frameworks in place. Therefore recent work has presented the relationship between localism and sustainable development as problematic.

Fundamentally then the Localism Act puts at risk the connected multi-scalar governance required to plan urban areas for a changing climate in favour of local planning, by abolishing any form of regional oversight, promoting more responsibility at neighbourhood level while slashing local authority budgets, and by allowing for interpretations of the plan in favour of unsustainable development with no view of how development can be managed regionally. Despite using the language of scale through the use of the term “local”, the Localism Act represents an inherent failure to understand the importance of scale in planning for environment, society and space. The allowance of such a risk sits fundamentally at odds with the urgency for governments to do everything in their

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<sup>32</sup> Sturzaker and Shaw.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen and McCarthy.

<sup>34</sup> Wills.

<sup>35</sup> Cowell.

<sup>36</sup> Bailey and Pill; Simin Davoudi and Ali Madanipour, *Reconsidering Localism*, ed. by Simin Davoudi and Ali Madanipour (New York; London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Nick Heynan, Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw, *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, ed. by Nick Heynan, Maria Kaika, and Erik Swyngedouw (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Cowell, p. 33.

power to mitigate the causes of global environmental change considering the immediacy of the emerging global crisis.<sup>39</sup>

Work to date on the relationship between the Localism Act and sustainability in England, have focused on policy and discourse across various case studies. Little has been said thus far on the impact of this policy disjuncture on physical space or looked at one physical site. We noted above the importance of the built form in helping to mitigate global environmental change. While there is a growing literature on the neo-liberalisation and standardisation of sustainable urban design agendas,<sup>40</sup> there is nonetheless widespread ‘best practice’ on how to build for particular models of sustainability. This ranges from Richard Rogers’s *Cities for a Small Planet*<sup>41</sup> to the 3C model of urban development posed by LSE Cities and the New Climate Economy commission,<sup>42</sup> and through the increasing use of the ‘environmental’ dimension of urban design.<sup>43</sup> Such best practice usually advocates building at higher densities, eliminating the need for long journeys, building on brownfield land before greenfield, promoting multi-modal transport networks, maintaining high-quality and accessible greenspaces and making cycling and walking easier. However this kind of physical development requires policy integration and connected governance at all scales.<sup>44</sup> If localism has been argued to be problematic in the sphere of policy outcomes, we should thus look to the physical to see how policy manifests itself in urban development. So, rather than examine localism and sustainability purely in policy terms then, we take a physical example which clearly demonstrates the problems highlighted above. We use the failed upgrade of a green pedestrian corridor in East London, a section of the Jubilee Greenway (hereafter ‘the Greenway’), to demonstrate the impacts of localism on a multi-scalar sustainability project. Understanding how governance shapes space is crucial if cities are to become the sites at which global environmental change is mitigated.

It has been argued that today’s failure to act in any meaningful way on sustainability is largely to do with the way in which we treat both the natural world and global environmental change as global phenomena that are abstracted from everyday life.<sup>45</sup> We have a strong notion of what we mean by ‘the natural’, which we see in the way we advertise products as ‘organic’ or in our ideas about getting back

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<sup>39</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report, Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Geneva: IPCC, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Michael Hebbert, ‘Re-Enclosure of the Urban Picturesque: Green-Space Transformations in Postmodern Urbanism’, *The Town Planning Review*, 79.1 (2008), 31–59. Mike Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’, *Area*, 47.2 (2015), 124–31; Suzanne Vallance and others, ‘Almost Invisible: Glimpsing the City and Its Residents in the Urban Sustainability Discourse’, *Urban Studies*, 2011, 1–16.

<sup>41</sup> Lord Richard Rogers, *Cities for a Small Planet: Reith Lectures* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew Carmona, ‘Sustainable Urban Design: Principles to Practice’, *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 12.1 (2009), 48–77.

<sup>44</sup> Bulkeley; Harriet Bulkeley and Michele Betsill, ‘Rethinking Sustainable Cities: Multilevel Governance and the “Urban” Politics of Climate Change’, *Environmental Politics*, 14.1 (2005), 42–63; Harriet Bulkeley and Michele Betsill, ‘Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change’, *Environmental Politics*, 22.1 (2013), 136–54.

<sup>45</sup> Alex Loftus, *Everyday Environmentalism: Creating an Urban Political Ecology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

to an authentic and unspoiled version of nature.<sup>46</sup> But we seem to be unable to acknowledge the ways in which we ourselves are part of a wider socio-natural assemblage and in doing so continue to plan for cities in a way in which nature and the urban are seen as oppositional.<sup>47</sup> This historical conceptual boundary is well-known and has been documented by Smith in his *Production of Nature* thesis.<sup>48</sup>

Smith proposed that the Enlightenment represented an ontological shift in the way in which humans see themselves in the relation to nature, from the integrated idea of the mediaeval world in which man and nature were inter-dependent, to the notion that man was not ‘nature’, and nature was there to be exploited, controlled and mastered.<sup>49</sup> The conceptual challenges within the relationship between the idea of nature and the idea of urban space, are still present today and reflected in the difficulties in planning and designing cities for sustainability.<sup>50</sup> This research shows how particular types of sustainability planning intersect through physical space owing to the way in which planning policies differ in how they treat sustainability. We hope that it serves to highlight the potentially dramatic outcomes for physical space if high-level planning policies are not aligned, but also the potentials that such conflicts in alignment can bring. And it calls for planners to continue to think about green urban policies in cities in ways which overcome the potentially damaging conceptual binary of seeing the natural and the urban as antithetical.

This thesis is therefore also concerned with the underlying value systems surrounding the policies of localism and sustainable urban development and how these impact upon the physical and social lives of cities. In order to interrogate further the competing claims over the local and the sustainable, we use the concepts of *scale* and *the natural* to unify these policies around shared themes. Scale and the natural are co-dependent: urban sustainability plans are always enacted over a particular scale or scales and simultaneously contain a particular understanding of human-natural relations, such as eco-centrism or anthropocentrism which inform sustainability assumptions. Furthermore - debates which are explicitly about scalar politics, rather than sustainability politics, are often discussed in terms of the “natural” political order to govern such as the Localism Act, or finding a scale of governance that reflects a naturally balanced geography of human-natural relations such as eco-localism,<sup>51</sup> or indeed the Garden City.<sup>52</sup> We will show how the configuration of scales and natures can be thought about as typologies of urban planning when brought together under certain conditions and consider the impacts these may have on the future of our site.

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<sup>46</sup> Loftus.

<sup>47</sup> Matthew Gandy, ‘Urban Nature and the Ecological Imaginery’, in *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, ed. by Nik Heynen, Maria Kaika, and Erik Swyngedouw (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2006); Loftus; Heynan, Kaika and Swyngedouw.

<sup>48</sup> Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

<sup>49</sup> Loftus.

<sup>50</sup> W. Mann, ‘Futures Past’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 18.4 (2014).

<sup>51</sup> Curtis.

<sup>52</sup> Graham Livesey, ‘Assemblage Theory, Gardens and the Legacy of the Early Garden City Movement’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 15.3 (2011), 271–78

In using physical space as a device through which to read the impact of policies on lived space, in this thesis then we will reflect on how conflicting rationalities over space driven in this case by the paradox of sustainability and localism, may lead to productive creativity about how space is remade. We take the position that outside the planner's gaze, places co-evolve in ways that planners may not be able to conceive at their inception,<sup>53</sup> and that planning is more than just what happens in a local government office. Planning can carry a broader meaning, that which includes the ability for people to shape their environments in ways that may not necessarily be obvious and visible to bureaucracies.<sup>54</sup> It is at these sites of tension that we can explore the interaction between the particularities of place and the impacts of policy.

### 1.2 Contribution to knowledge

With the Localism Act implemented as recently as 2011, and with the process of neighbourhood planning a time-intensive procedure as shown from the experiences in London<sup>55</sup> and various other locales,<sup>56</sup> this research builds on the growing evidence base from around the country of the different ways in which localism is being realised and the impacts it has on places. Recent research has looked at strategic tensions localism creates,<sup>57</sup> the ability for it to widen socio-spatial justice and access to planning services,<sup>58</sup> different policy outcomes in different local contexts<sup>59</sup> and the impact on delivering sustainability.<sup>60</sup> This research builds on this by making an original contribution to this growing body of knowledge in two main ways.

Firstly, as we have seen, sustainability planning must work across scales if it is to address the multi-scalar realities of governing for a changing climate. Yet it is also clear that sustainability policy has considerable variability owing to the vague meanings applied to the term and the way in which it can serve seemingly contrasting political agendas. There have been many analyses of the different ways sustainability is conceived at the local level in urban regeneration,<sup>61</sup> for example Lombardi *et. al.*'s

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<sup>53</sup> James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); Loftus; Mike Raco and Emma Tunney, 'Visibilities and Invisibilities in Urban Development: Small Business Communities and the London Olympics 2012', *Urban Studies*, 47.10 (2012), 2069–91

<sup>55</sup> London Assembly Planning Committee, *Localism in London: What's the Story?* (London, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Wills.

<sup>57</sup> Gallent, Iqbal and Manuela.

<sup>58</sup> Catney and others; Davoudi and Madanipour, 'Localism and Neo-Liberal Governmentality'.

<sup>59</sup> Hildreth.

<sup>60</sup> Cowell.

<sup>61</sup> Sue Brownill and Juliet Carpenter, 'Governance and "Integrated" Planning: The Case of Sustainable Communities in the Thames Gateway, England', *Urban Studies*, 46.2 (2009), 251–74

analysis of a single regeneration area in Birmingham.<sup>62</sup> Lombardi *et. al.* showed clear variations in the way sustainability was conceived across a range of policy documents and interviews with different officials. However they didn't consider scale in their analysis of the single regeneration area. In this thesis we will look at planning policies across multiple scales with an impact on our area of study so that we can understand the various ways in which sustainability is being conceived from the national to the local. This will show us the ways in which sustainability varies in its meaning at each scale of planning, as each plan represents a different type of governance. We will therefore conduct a scalar analysis of planning policy which provides an evidence base with which to compare what happens in physical space, or rather, the impacts on the ground. At the moment this has not been conducted since the Localism Act has been in force with a view to apply such findings to physical outcomes in urban space.

Secondly, we have noted the importance of the physical development and form of cities in helping to mitigate global environmental change. Work to date on localism, even when it considers sustainability, as Cowell has, has not considered the impact localism has on physical space and the potential this may have on realising visions of sustainable urbanism. There are many scholars who have looked the impact of policy on physical space, particularly in urban political ecology: for example, Amity Doolittle's study of the impact of planning on different types of urban nature in New Haven, Connecticut.<sup>63</sup> However this has not yet been tested under localism in England. We thus conduct a site-based analysis of a section of the Greenway, as a singular multi-scalar, multi-functional green corridor which runs through different planning authorities in East London providing a strong example of the problems of the policy disjuncture highlighted above. We show how the Greenway had great potential to be planned in accordance with urban design and governance principles, which would have enabled a more sustainable development of East London, but failed because of the impacts of the policies from the Localism Act, driven by national government, limiting the scalar approach necessary for sustainability planning.

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<sup>62</sup> Rachel Lombardi and others, 'Conceptualising Sustainability in UK Urban Regeneration: A Discursive Formation', *Urban Studies*, 48.2 (2011), 273–96

<sup>63</sup> Amity Doolittle, 'The Best of Many Worlds: Methodological Pluralism in Political Ecology', in *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*, ed. by Raymond L Bryant (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015).

### 1.3 The global context of localism and sustainable development

From the 1960s there has been a marked increase in concern about environmental crises and political centralisation in response to the growth of mass consumerism, the increasing failure of massive infrastructure and planning projects, the limited natural capacities of the planet's resources, the growth of state bureaucracies, and the looming threat of nuclear war.<sup>64</sup> The first picture of the earth from space, an image of the global whole, sparked intense interest in the ecology movement which went hand in hand with localism:<sup>65</sup> a sense that in order to have a sustainable planet, we must return to smaller scales of consumption, production, and in turn, governance. Key moments during this time included the Club of Rome's report *Limits to Growth*,<sup>66</sup> which for the first time used computer models to forecast collapse of industrial society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*,<sup>67</sup> which critiqued the entire modern industrial economy as being unsustainable, asserting that economists should rethink how they value commodities, and fundamentally that a rethink is needed of the appropriate scale of any human activity.

In the 1980s, across developed economies, the deepening of globalisation and shift toward neo-liberal government was paralleled by calls to reduce the size of the state and criticisms of centralised governance.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, as governments were being re-structured downwards and outwards, environmental concerns became globalised to the highest tier of governance at the level of the United Nations.<sup>69</sup> Most national and local governments had not yet been convinced that global warming was manmade and an ideological conflict was apparent between the turn to neo-liberalism on the one hand and the recognition that industrial production and consumerism could be causing environmental damage and global warming on the other. In addition, at the end of the cold war era, anti-growth strategies associated with green politics were deemed void under the new hegemonic ideology that argued that free-market economics would solve the world's social and economic problems, as socialism and communism, which were collapsing around the world, had failed to.<sup>70</sup> Thus right at the beginning of global governance on environmental policies, there was a tension between economic development and environmentalism which is still with us today.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> James Scott.

<sup>65</sup> Loftus.

<sup>66</sup> Donella H. Meadows and Club of Rome, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (London: Pan Books, 1974).

<sup>67</sup> E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as If People Mattered* (London: Vintage, 1993).

<sup>68</sup> Neil Brenner, 'The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration', *Progress in Human Geography*, 25 (2001), 591–614; James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, 1998.

<sup>69</sup> John Drexhage and Debora Murphy, *Sustainable Development: From Brundtland to Rio 2012* (New York, N.Y.).

<sup>70</sup> James Scott.

<sup>71</sup> Barry Cullworth and Vincent Nadin, *Town and Country Planning in the UK*, 14th edition (New York: Routledge, 2006).

The term *sustainable development* encapsulates this tension most clearly. It is the belief that economic and social development can occur ‘sustainably’, meaning we can grow our economies today without threatening the resources available for future generations.<sup>72</sup> This is achieved through technologies, plans and governance frameworks designed to minimise carbon emissions and protect ecosystems. This was first articulated at the global level in the World Commission on the Environment and Development’s report *Our Common Future* (commonly known as the Brundtland report) in 1987.<sup>73</sup>

The report provided the first high-level framework to help national governments work towards an idea of sustainable development.<sup>74</sup> It required striking a balance between social, economic and environmental concerns, but was rooted in the notion of continued economic growth, despite great variation in the capability and political leanings of national governments across five continents. The combined effect of the sustainable development agenda and neo-liberal governance has been the proliferation of localist agendas, particularly in developed countries since the early 1990s.<sup>75</sup> There has been an uneasy alliance between localism for the sake of a more flexible and smaller state<sup>76</sup> and localism for the purposes of better environmental governance to enable sustainable development.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to pre-existing cities, new eco-cities and urban extensions across the world are being built at a rapid speed. In England, a new wave of Garden Cities has been planned to accommodate the growth of the southeast of England.<sup>78</sup> From Lagos<sup>79</sup> to Cairo<sup>80</sup>, entirely new ‘sustainable’ cities are being built, often as replacements for existing ones. With the ability to plan urban extensions and cities anew, it becomes crucial that good urban design and policies can ‘lock-in’ pathways that prevent negative environmental impacts. Global urban populations are forecast to grow over the coming century,<sup>81</sup> and at the same time carbon dioxide emissions are predicted to rise.<sup>82</sup> It is therefore crucial that human habitation in the 21st century and beyond can both adapt to and mitigate global warming, resource depletion and environmental degradation. In order to do this, governments must ensure that there is adequate capacity to deliver at each of the necessary scales of intervention.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (New York, 1987).

<sup>73</sup> Drexhage and Murphy.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*.

<sup>75</sup> Mike Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’, *Antipode*, 37 (2005), 324–347. Simon Marvin and Simon Guy, ‘Creating Myths rather than Sustainability: The Transition Fallacies of the New Localism’, *Local Environment*, 2 (1997), 311–318.

<sup>76</sup> Kristian Olesen, ‘Planning Theory Strategic Spatial Planning’, *Planning Theory*, 13 (2014), 288 – 303.

<sup>77</sup> Neil Carter, *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy*, 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 2007). Chapter four.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Booth, ‘New Garden City in Kent “Will Provide up to 5,000 Homes by 2019”’, *The Guardian*, November 2015 <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/nov/03/new-garden-city-kent-provide-5000-homes-before-2019>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

<sup>79</sup> Martin Lukacs, ‘New, Privatized African City Heralds Climate Apartheid’, *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2014/jan/21/new-privatized-african-city-heralds-climate-apartheid>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

<sup>80</sup> Patrick Kingsley, ‘A New New Cairo: Egypt Plans £30bn Purpose-Built Capital in Desert’, *The Guardian*, March 2015 <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/mar/16/new-cairo-egypt-plans-capital-city-desert>> [accessed 19 July 2016].

<sup>81</sup> United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: Highlights*.

<sup>82</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

### 1.4 Review of key concepts

In this section we will review the two key concepts pertaining to this thesis, that of localism and sustainability. For each we will also look at the role of scale and the natural by dedicating a sub-section to each. This then allows us to formulate our research framework and questions.

#### 1.4.1 Localism

Localism is an idea that can be found in many facets of society: from policy, to consumerism, to governance. Yet its definition remains unclear.<sup>83</sup> Catney writes

...there is no monist “localism” and it has proven to be an exceptionally protean entity, extremely elastic in its application so that anarchists, social democrats, neo-liberals and environmentalists alike can subscribe to it as a focus for new forms of social organisation.<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless there have been various attempts to understand the various types of ways in which it has been understood and discursively deployed. Davoudi and Madanipour distinguish between localism and localisation, the former as a mode of governance, the latter as a condition of shrinking the scale of production and consumption chains.<sup>85</sup> Hildreth distinguishes between conditional, representative and community localism, each stressing various dimensions of political engagement, participation and relationships between citizens, civil society, local and national governments.<sup>86</sup> There is the realm of the everyday where the local is not formally defined by an authority but lived and experienced through practices and routines.<sup>87</sup> We can summarise here however that the Localism Act represents the ‘negative localism’ articulated by Catney and ‘community localism’ articulated by Hildreth. Negative localism Catney suggests is

the discourse of “freeing communities” is used without any –or at least highly limited – understanding of differences across society. Places (and individuals) are imagined as islands, with the emphasis on the positive virtues of competition and self-sufficiency.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Prior to the Localism Act, Area-Based Initiatives can be said to be localist, but so too are older forms of functional neighbourhood planning. In consumerism, locally-sourced foods and local-currencies have become popular and profitable. See for example, John Germov, Lauren Williams and Maria Freij, ‘Portrayal of the Slow Food Movement in the Australian Print Media: Conviviality, Localism and Romanticism’, *Journal of Sociology*, 47 (2011), 89 – 106.

<sup>84</sup> Catney and others, p. 715.

<sup>85</sup> Davoudi and Madanipour, ‘Localism and Neo-Liberal Governmentality’.

<sup>86</sup> Hildreth.

<sup>87</sup> Loftus.

<sup>88</sup> Catney and others, p. 717.



And Hildreth's 'community localism' is defined as

Decentralization or devolution from the centre to citizens and local communities. The ambition is to empower engagement by local communities like in "Big Society". This may involve working with, or even by-passing or weakening local government... [w]here the centre delegates responsibility for running services to local communities (sometimes removing control from local authorities), but retains overall supervisory and/or commissioning role (e.g. free schools and academies).<sup>89</sup>

Below it will be shown through work by various scholars and the wider political context how the Act reflects Catney and Hildreth's definitions.

The Government had said that the Localism Act was brought in to counteract inefficiencies and to empower 'the people' to plan their own places and local decision-making processes.<sup>90</sup> The Government asserted that this would result in less wasteful governance through more efficient decision-making.<sup>91</sup> The Localism Act was also a direct challenge to what came before it, which was perceived to be years of creeping statism under the New Labour Governments. That had included policies such as housing targets and Regional Development Agencies and other quasi-governmental organisations (quangos), which were considered to be too top-down in their approach.<sup>92</sup> It was argued that under New Labour the planning system disenfranchised local communities, yet at the same time was inflexible and impeded development.<sup>93</sup> As such, National Planning Guidance was also drastically simplified into the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

As we noted earlier, this form of localism is a reflection of the neo-liberal agenda of shrinking the state. The situation here, whereby local authorities have increased powers over planning on the one hand but with both diminished and spatially uneven access to financial resources to implement such powers on the other, has been argued by some to reflect a particular phase of neo-liberal urban governance. We can summarise this form of localism, as firstly having increased responsibility with diminished resources, and secondly as an accentuation of the 'post-code lottery' or increased inequity of socio-spatial justice. It is premised on the idea that places are distinctive and that local approaches to democracy and participation are more effective and democratic than from more distant governance. However in its application the Localism Act could provide local authorities powers that are meant to compensate for the cuts they have received. Although the Government recently announced that councils could hold on to business retention rate growth, which is a form of local tax raising powers,

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<sup>89</sup> Hildreth, p. 704.

<sup>90</sup> Clarke and Cochrane; Gallent, Iqbal and Manuela; Sturzaker and Shaw; Crown Copyright, 'Localism Act 2011'.

<sup>91</sup> Crown Copyright, 'Localism Act 2011'; Sturzaker and Shaw.

<sup>92</sup> Decentralisation Decade – IPPR. Localism Act, Phillip Allmendinger and Graham Haughton, 'The Evolution and Trajectories of English Spatial Governance: "Neoliberal" Episodes in Planning', *Planning Practice and Research*, 28.1 (2013), 6–26.

<sup>93</sup> DCLG.

local authorities are still very much dependent for funding on central government departments.<sup>94</sup> Despite claims to the contrary, the Localism Act is still rooted in top down, distant decision-making, rather than having any genuine consideration of how places differ in their capacities to manage and deliver local change.

If the Government is therefore comfortable with a spatial philosophy which allows divergence in councils' planning capability, we must question how they think such an approach would hold true to their claim of being the 'greenest government ever'.<sup>95</sup> Of course urban planning may not be the only way in which sustainable practices, however conceived, can be realised: lifestyle habits, consumption and production, national and international governments and corporations, are major causes of carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>96</sup> But if cities are the main sites of carbon dioxide emissions and cities must be planned somehow, the variation from city to city in carbon dioxide output could be dramatically shaped by the right planning policy and design solutions.<sup>97</sup> We must ask therefore whether this form of localism is likely to help realise sustainable urbanism.

### 1.4.1.1 *Localism and scale*

In the last 40 years, socio-economic, environmental and political transformations have challenged traditional notions of scale in geography and debates around urban governance. The Localism Act, and the background context of austerity, are both firmly rooted in the tradition of economic deregulation and parallel re-scaling of governance structures to favour deeper neo-liberalization of society and space through the planning system since the late 1970s.<sup>98</sup> The impact of this economic change on governance structures has been extensively documented, analysed and critiqued. Major industrial change in western economies, coupled with new modes of governance, created increasingly uneven development within western countries.<sup>99</sup> Such effects drew attention to scalar-specific problems such as the 'urban question' and the 'regional question'.<sup>100</sup> In the 1970s the inner city was 'rediscovered' as an object of policy intervention following de-industrialisation.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Local Government Association.

<sup>95</sup> Cowell.

<sup>96</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

<sup>97</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.

<sup>98</sup> Allmendinger and Haughton, 'The Evolution and Trajectories of English Spatial Governance: "Neoliberal" Episodes in Planning'; Brenner; Clarke and Cochrane; Olesen.

<sup>99</sup> David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, 2nd edition (London: Verso Books, 2013); Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2005); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1990); Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

<sup>100</sup> Andrew Herod, *Scale* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>101</sup> Allan Cochrane, *Understanding Urban Policy: A Critical Approach* (Oxford; Malden: Blackwell, 2007); Peter Hall and Mark Tewdwr-Jones, *Urban and Regional Planning*, 5th edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

However, the adoption of neo-liberal economics in the early 1980s in the United Kingdom and the USA saw new modes of governance, which directly re-shaped the long-held certainties of the provisions of governance structures. The administrative geographies symptomatic of the post-war state apparatus at local, regional and national scales have since the early 1980s been largely modified to accommodate the increasing neo-liberalisation of society and space at large<sup>102</sup> through the expansion of arms-length government agencies,<sup>103</sup> the privatisation of infrastructures,<sup>104</sup> the privatisation and militarisation of space,<sup>105</sup> and through encouraging both cities and citizens to become more entrepreneurial.<sup>106</sup> Brenner summarised in the early 2000s that:

Throughout the last two decades, the geoeconomic project of neoliberalism has entailed a massive assault upon established scales of sociopolitical regulation (particularly those of the Keynesian welfare national state) and an aggressive attempt to forge new global, national, regional and local scalar hierarchies in which unrestricted capital mobility, unfettered market relations, intensified commodification and a logic of ‘beggar-thy-neighbo[u]r’ competition are to be permanently institutionalized.<sup>107</sup>

Throughout this period of neo-liberalisation, there have been attempts to explain and categorise the relationship between neo-liberalism and government strategies of re-scaling.<sup>108</sup> As one of the instruments of state power, and especially since it was so central to state planning, the profession of urban planning is today one of the last vestiges of the state which can work to mediate society and space beyond purely market logics.<sup>109</sup> Despite this position, urban planning has experienced significant rescaling in the last thirty-five years as governance has been neo-liberalised.<sup>110</sup> New arms-length organisations have been introduced at overlapping and intermediate tiers of governance, tasked with planning for new scalar problems such as urban areas with entrenched pockets of deprivation or even ‘failing’ cities and regions.<sup>111</sup> Examples include low-tax areas such as enterprise zones, regional development agencies focusing on urban agglomeration economics, urban regeneration corporations

<sup>102</sup> Brenner, ‘The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration’.

<sup>103</sup> Phillip Allmendinger and Graham Haughton, ‘Soft Spaces, Fuzzy Boundaries, and Metagovernance: The New Spatial Planning in the Thames Gateway’, *Environment and Planning A*, 41.3 (2009), 617–33; Phillip Allmendinger and Mark Tewdwr-Jones, ‘New Labour, New Planning? The Trajectory of Planning in Blair’s Britain’, *Urban Studies*, 37.8 (2000), 1379–1402; Olesen.

<sup>104</sup> Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>105</sup> Graham and Marvin; Anna Minton, *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First-Century City* (London: Penguin, 2012).

<sup>106</sup> Rowland Atkinson, ‘Domestication by Cappuccino or a Revenge on Management of Public Spaces’, *Urban Studies*, 40.9 (2003), 1829–43; David Harvey, ‘From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism’, *Geografiska Annaler*, 71.1 (1989), 3–17.

<sup>107</sup> Brenner, ‘The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration’. p. 594.

<sup>108</sup> Alice Cohen and James McCarthy, ‘Reviewing Rescaling: Strengthening the Case for Environmental Considerations’, 39 (2015), 3–25 <doi:10.1177/0309132514521483>.

<sup>109</sup> Alex Lord and Mark Tewdwr-Jones, ‘Is Planning “Under Attack”? Chronicling the Deregulation of Urban and Environmental Planning in England’, *European Planning Studies*, 22 (2014), 345–61.

<sup>110</sup> Allmendinger and Haughton, ‘The Evolution and Trajectories of English Spatial Governance: “Neoliberal” Episodes in Planning’.

<sup>111</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’.

in inner city areas, localism and neighbourhood planning and most recently, devolution deals.<sup>112</sup> Each of these targets a particular problem at a particular scale or scales.

Scale itself as a concept is not straightforward or stable. Andrew Herod in his work simply titled *Scale* summarises research in recent years on the matter.<sup>113</sup> From the local to the regional and international, he unpacks the debates that have been prominent in the last 30 or 40 years. At the base of the “scalar debates” are different views on the ontology of scale. Herod argues that there are three main dimensions of scale which have been settled upon – idealistic, materialistic and discursive. Idealistic understandings of geographic scale are those which assume that they exist *a priori* and are not brought into existence through material or discursive definitions. Material understandings of scale are those which believe scale to exist physically in space, and we give them categories based on a quantitative basis, such as ‘regional’ or ‘national’. Materialist understandings of scale use the categories which have been given to them by idealistic understandings. Discursive understandings of scale are those which understand scale to be something that is spoken or enacted through text, speech and images that reflect a particular arrangement or constellation of power.<sup>114</sup>

Each of these three understandings of scale can be found in localism in general but also the Localism Act itself. An assumption of what is meant by the phrase “localism” reflects an *a priori* understanding of scale, whereas a physical local authority boundary presents us with a material understanding of scale that is quantified and measured. Localism is also a discursive act around which multiple actors use instruments of power to claim and contest its meaning. We will call these *acts of scal-ing* and the Localism Act is one of the ways central government is engaging in re-scaling planning around a particular notion of a particular scale. While scale has been used discursively in the form of the Localism Act, this discourse has material impacts in shaping spatial outcomes on the ground. In this thesis we work between the material and discursive notions of scale and how they interact to produce particular outcomes.

### 1.4.1.2 *Localism and the natural*

Throughout political history notions of the local have been twinned with notions of the natural.<sup>115</sup> In turn, this has fed into ideas about how best to plan cities for society in the most natural manner such

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<sup>112</sup> Keith Shaw and Mark Tewdwr-Jones, “Disorganised Devolution”: Reshaping Metropolitan Governance in England in a Period of Austerity’, *Raumforschung Und Raumordnung*, 2016.

<sup>113</sup> Herod.

<sup>114</sup> Robert J. Kaiser and Elena Nikiforova, ‘The Performativity of Scale: The Social Construction of Scale Effects in Narva, Estonia’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26.3 (2008), 537–62

<sup>115</sup> Simon Schama, *Forces of Nature* (BBC, 2001).

as those proposed by Howard.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, those who put forward the Localism Act did so as part of this historical precedent, arguing that it is a more natural reflection of local governance, participation and efficiency as it would help to support bottom-up systems of local democracy and governance,<sup>117</sup> otherwise known as subsidiary. Notions of natural governance have also fed into notions of natural justice, particularly around spatial justice.<sup>118</sup> This has significant consequences on whether or not the state should redistribute goods and services within a nation to provide, for example, social and economic support to ‘naturally’ disadvantaged areas or regions. For example, under Margaret Thatcher’s Government, it was conceived by cabinet ministers that government should stop funding what it argued to be Liverpool in terminal decline.<sup>119</sup> With the shift from an industrial economy to a service economy, it was argued that there was no point in propping a system that was dying. Thus, notions of the natural have profound impacts on debates around the allocation and distribution of goods and services within a nation.

Localism was argued to be a return to a more equitable system of government on the basis that it was more natural than regionally imposed development targets.<sup>120</sup> This was argued on account of democratic deficit and efficiency,<sup>121</sup> for example that distant regional governments should not be determining local places’ housing developments, as only local places knew best where to plan and build new housing. They could therefore make more nuanced and better choices, meaning a more efficient use and allocation of development. However, we cannot view this as being in isolation from the contradiction underpinning conservative philosophy out of which this form of localism has emerged.

Although, as shown above, the Localism Act has in general been argued to be about democracy, participation and efficiency with respect to concepts of the natural, there is an inherent contradiction which is also at the heart of conservative philosophy. This is the clash between two very different understandings of the natural. The first is to be generally supportive of the natural rights of monarchy and aristocracy who by their nature have major hand-holdings and the second are the ‘natural laws’ of the free-market. The former represents traditional conservative values of aristocratic entitlement, whereas the second represents free-market economics which we now associate with neo-liberalism and the policies of Margaret Thatcher’s three Governments. Both believe in minimal state interference and reject centralised administration for redistributing goods and services. Yet both are in conflict as one would welcome development at any cost, and the other would like to protect land from being developed. This tension lies at the heart of the Localism Act. On the one hand it claims to be about

<sup>116</sup> Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*; (Breinigsville, PA.: General Books LLC, 2012).

<sup>117</sup> Davoudi and Madanipour, ‘Localism and Neo-Liberal Governmentality’.

<sup>118</sup> Katarina Nylund, ‘Conceptions of Justice in the Planning of the New Urban Landscape – Recent Changes in the Comprehensive Planning Discourse in Malmö, Sweden’, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 15 (2014), 41–61.

<sup>119</sup> BBC, ‘Thatcher Urged “Let Liverpool Decline” after 1981 Riots’, *BBC News*, 2011 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16361170>> [accessed 10 June 2015].

<sup>120</sup> DCLG; Shaw and Tewdwr-Jones.

<sup>121</sup> Hildreth; Gallent, Iqbal and Manuela; Sturzaker and Shaw.

preserving local accountability and the rights of local people to participate in their own local democratic structures. But on the other hand, it is about a more 'efficient' path to development, and that where possible, development should be granted unless there is an overwhelming reason against it.<sup>122</sup> Thus, regional development agencies were seen as a block to development, and have arguably been removed on notions of efficiency.

Localism has also been deemed to be a 'natural' form of governance from an ecological position. It is assumed, as Purcell notes in his attack on the privileging of local scales above others, that localised processes of production, consumption and therefore governance are more natural forms of governance for sustainability.<sup>123</sup> Before the coining of the term *sustainable development* and the science of ecology, local governance was implicitly tied to environmental concerns and vice-versa. There have been many historical examples in urban and regional planning with explicit naturalistic ideas in mind which sought to either 'balance' man and nature,<sup>124</sup> or to mesh them together in a more chaotic manner, both which require decision-making at a local level.<sup>125</sup> It is for this reason that some claim environmentalism can also be attractive to political conservatives.<sup>126</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century it was clear that environmental degradation, urban health and industrialisation were part of the same problem around how to maintain urban and industrial growth without destroying nature. After industrialisation had begun to create a new class of urban workers, by 1848 a series of revolutions across Europe posed a political challenge to elites; political representation for this new class was imperative if outcomes similar to the French Revolution were to be avoided.<sup>127</sup> In Britain, the Great Reform Act of 1832 went some way towards addressing issues of representation. This was one outcome from a bloody confrontation in Manchester in 1819 between the Government and advocates of political representation for the working classes.<sup>128</sup> However, the growth of industrial cities led to squalor, degradation, disease, overcrowding and worsening life expectancies on a scale not previously encountered. Industrial cities therefore became sites of debate over political organisation, environmental management and human health.<sup>129</sup>

Political responses to these crises varied but after the publication of Engels' 1845 *The Condition of the Working Classes in England*, the entire political system of liberal capitalism came under fire from growing anarchist, socialist and communist movements, which also spawned thinkers that would

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<sup>122</sup> Cowell.

<sup>123</sup> Fred Curtis, 'Eco-Localism and Sustainability', *Ecological Economics*, 46 (2003), 83–102; Robin Hahnel, 'Eco-Localism: A Constructive Critique', *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 18 (2007), 62 – 78.

<sup>124</sup> Howard.

<sup>125</sup> Curtis.

<sup>126</sup> Carter.

<sup>127</sup> Eric Hawbsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848 - 1875* (London: Abacus, 1977), p. 15.

<sup>128</sup> Eric J. Evans, *The Great Reform Act of 1832* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 30.

<sup>129</sup> Robin Evans, 'Rookeries and Model Dwellings: English Housing Reform and the Moralities of Private Space', *Architectural Association Quarterly*, 10.1 (1978), 24–35; Peter Hall, 'The City of Dreadful Night', in *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988), pp. 14–46; Stephen Halliday, *The Great Stink of London: Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Metropolis*, New edition (Stroud: The History Press, 2001).

influence the first urban planners.<sup>130</sup> One of these thinkers was Kropotkin who presented plans for a system of land ownership and economic organisation that would ensure the preservation of nature and the maintenance of a harmonious existence for workers. This would be done through distributing production beyond urban centres in a planned manner and that communities would exist at an ideal scale for political engagement.<sup>131</sup>

Kropotkin directly influenced Howard, whose work was fundamentally about the second part of its title “A peaceful path to reform”. Howard realised that political reform and ultimately, political stability, lay in being able to plan the relationship between localities and nature in a way which ensured community life was preserved, but that there was enough industry in each Garden City for meaningful work.<sup>132</sup> Through being closer to nature in the city, being spared from industrial diseases, and the virtue of working on one’s own garden, Garden Cities would benefit the health and social life of all workers.<sup>133</sup> This represented an attempt to place the question of our relationship to nature at the heart of social, economic and political organisation.

Today, Garden Cities are once again being advocated as a solution for social, economic and political issues. ‘Nature’ is therefore once again the concept around which these issues are discussed. The new Garden Cities should conform to principles of ‘sustainable urbanism’ – the balance between socio-economic and environmental concerns. In addition, they are to be realised under localism with strong community involvement in how they are developed and managed.<sup>134</sup> In planning sustainable cities, then, we must be concerned with the ‘type’ of sustainability we are talking about and which political impulse this is coming from. The question of whether sustainable urbanism is about maintaining the status quo of continual economic growth, or whether it is about another form of socio-economic organisation, must be addressed if sustainability is to have any meaning in how it is implemented.

### 1.4.2 Sustainability

Over-consumption of the earth’s resources, environmental degradation and dangerous carbon dioxide emissions have led us into a crisis of development. In the twenty-first century, many countries in the Global South are experiencing rapid growth along a trajectory of mass consumerism, urbanisation and car-dependent suburbanisation.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, developed economies have themselves not developed beyond mass consumerism into say, a post-material society and in some places are still developing for

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<sup>130</sup> Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988).

<sup>131</sup> Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

<sup>132</sup> Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

<sup>133</sup> Graham Livesey, ‘Assemblage Theory, Gardens and the Legacy of the Early Garden City Movement’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 15 (2011), 271–278.

<sup>134</sup> Booth.

<sup>135</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate; United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: Highlights*.

## Introduction

a future based on cheap oil.<sup>136</sup> Both of these interdependent trends are causing continuing high carbon dioxide emissions (the main cause of global warming) as well as resource depletion and the destruction of ecosystems around the world. A stable climate, sustainable extraction and use of resources, and healthy ecosystems are vital for the survival of life on earth and so with rapid economic growth comes the threat of systemic collapse of human civilisation.<sup>137</sup>

Of these threats, the most important is our changing climate, which itself is driven by increasing concentrations of carbon in the earth's atmosphere (the main source of which is fossil fuel emissions) causing the planet to absorb and retain more infrared radiation from the sun. This is known as the greenhouse effect. The average global temperature of the earth's surface is expected to rise to increase by as much as 2 centigrade by 2100.<sup>138</sup> This is causing thermal expansion of the oceans, melting glaciers and melting ice-caps. This warming will also affect weather patterns and increase the frequency of flood events through increased storms and rising sea levels. There will also be an increase of heat-related disasters such as wildfires and droughts, as the pattern of the earth's climatic zones begins to change. According to the IPCC, the effects of climate change will affect security, food supply and, ultimately, human existence itself.<sup>139</sup>

We noted earlier that the 1987 report *Our Common Future* attempted to put into place frameworks to help articulate a system of governance that could accommodate growth while also both mitigating climate change as far as possible and helping societies adapt to its unavoidable effects. However, it was not until 2015 that the world's first comprehensive agreement on practical steps to reducing the effects of climate change was drafted, known as the *Paris Agreement*. This agreement took place within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and was signed or ratified by 192 countries. The agreement commits countries around the world to work to prevent the earth warming by more than two degrees centigrade, the figure which has been identified as potentially hazardous to survival on earth. So, in both 1987 and 2015 there were attempts to deal with climate change at the global level.

What is different between these moments, however, is that the 1987 report was concerned with the broad notion of 'sustainable development', whereas the Paris agreement deals explicitly with issues of global warming, carbon reduction and quantitative reporting tools to monitor progress – which are easier to measure. Sustainable development as a concept was adaptable around the world across different scales as a governance framework for managing social, economic and environmental processes. Its central aim was that environmental protection should not come at the expense of less growth. As such sustainability is different to more specific environmental concerns such as global

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<sup>136</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.

<sup>137</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

<sup>138</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

<sup>139</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.



warming and ecosystem protection, in the sense that it places the environment as an equal partner to social and economic concerns, rather than seeing economic growth being contained with natural environmental limits.

Sustainable development has become a widely used policy framework in various different governance and socio-economic contexts. There are three major sustainability models, all of which contain three dimensions or realms of human activity: the social, the environmental, and the economic. Nearly all governments engaged in sustainability recognise these three dimensions.<sup>140</sup> Social dimensions of sustainability include job creation, access to housing, health and other aspects of human development. Environmental dimensions of sustainability are concerned with reducing carbon emissions, ecosystem protection, conservation and restoration. Economic dimensions of sustainability are concerned with ensuring that businesses are responsible both to their workers, their environment and that they take corporate social responsibility seriously. This includes good jobs, upholding workers' rights, sustainable supply chains and sound long-term business model to avoid economic collapse.

Variation between the three models of sustainable development comes from a different conceptual understanding of the relationship the three dimensions have to each other.<sup>141</sup> The first model is the 'three-legged stool' model, which implies that each realm is totally separate and has no overlap to any of the others. Each leg in the stool represents a dimension and together they hold the stool. The seat of the stool at the top is sustainable development. However, if just one "leg" (e.g. economic) is absent, the entire stool of sustainability will collapse. The second model is the overlapping circle model where each realm is separate but also contains fields where they overlap. Sustainable development is only achieved at the centre of the Venn diagram, where all three dimensions are working together. The third model is the three-nested-dependencies model. This model places the dimensions inside each other, implying, unlike the previous two models, that there are environmental limits to sustainable development. In this model the economic dimension is placed at the heart, which is contained by the social because economic needs can only be achieved if social needs (housing, education, health) are first in place for a workforce to exist. The social, containing the economic, is itself then contained by the environmental, showing that the social and the economic are constrained by the environment in the way of natural resources. It argues that all socio-economic activities are ultimately constrained by global resources.<sup>142</sup>

We can place these three models along an axis of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism. An ecocentric approach to sustainability would argue that non-human lifeforms have inherent value and that we shouldn't be using 'nature' for our own survival alone.<sup>143</sup> Anthropocentric approaches claim that non-

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<sup>140</sup> Yvonne Rydin, *Governing for Sustainable Urban Development*, 1st edition (London; Washington, DC: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>141</sup> Rydin.

<sup>142</sup> Lombardi and others; Rydin.

<sup>143</sup> Carter.

human lifeforms are instrumental to human survival, so we must protect the environment to protect ourselves.<sup>144</sup> Further clarification is needed here as each approach depends on whether humans are considered part of ‘nature’ or not, and on the role of sentience, consciousness, responsibility and ethics. However, we will return to these points later. For now, it is important to note that the three-legged-stool model and the overlapping circle model are more anthropocentric as both imagine a status quo position, whereas the three-nested-dependencies model understands that everything is contained by the limits of the environment, and is therefore a more ecocentric position.

However, as most current sustainability paradigms are largely based on the more anthropocentric overlapping circle model, there has been criticism that they simply maintain the current socio-economic status quo of neo-liberal growth, and mask material political issues such as structural inequality. This model of sustainability has been accused of being symptomatic of post-political governance. Indeed Raco notes the ways in which under such models, governing for sustainability has been simplified with problems being compartmentalised into abstract quantitative outcomes, and then subsequently “rolled out” across other scales and contexts.<sup>145</sup> Given this, it has never been so vital to discuss the best and the worst aspects of sustainable urban policy and design, and the kinds of cities – and the kind of world – they are proposing. The ways in which the governance of cities takes account of the problem of global climate change, and the types of sustainability strategies it employs, are crucial, given the significant impact cities have on the problem of global climate change. Thus sustainable development at the urban level must be further understood as it intersects with different governance regimes such as localism.

### 1.4.2.1 *Sustainability and scale*

Governing for a changing climate is inherently wrought with political tensions at different geographic scales<sup>146</sup> and the sites at which policy and interventions should be made is a topic of ongoing political negotiation. Climate change governance involves two main dimensions – scale and function. By scale, we mean the tier or tiers of governance and/or interventions which should be mobilised to effect change, for example, an urban municipality introducing an emissions charge, or a national government introducing a carbon emissions target. By function, we mean the specific processes or supply chains involved such as waste management, district heating, traffic management, house building or food production. For example, the idea of locally sourced food is a seemingly attractive way of reducing the environmental impact of, transportation, storage, and mono-cultures, yet it is

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<sup>144</sup> Carter.

<sup>145</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’.

<sup>146</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, ‘Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change’; Bulkeley; Marvin and Guy.

questionable whether large cities could ever be self-reliant on food from their hinterlands. On the other hand, district heating schemes are a genuinely viable and attractive concept that can work at the urban scale to reduce energy consumption and potentially lower costs for the consumer. Given differences such as these, analyses of urban sustainability governance have rightly sought and promoted a multi-scalar framework for understanding how best to achieve sustainability outcomes that are more closely aligned with everyday life and the socio-technologies of cities,<sup>147</sup> rather than being detached abstract models of harmonious balance, which typifies many sustainable development discourses at present.<sup>148</sup>

Attention also needs to be paid to how sites and tiers of intervention aggregate upwards to create a cumulative total effect on climate change mitigation. We have already seen that the Localism Act assumed that, in theory, the cumulative sum of localities would aggregate upward to reflect the national whole, by-passing city-regional or regional scales of co-ordination. *Local Agenda 21* is an example of this whereby local governments around the world work together towards common goals not set by the nations in which they are in.<sup>149</sup> The Localism Act, argue Davoudi and Mandanipour, is a scalar construction which by-passes the region.<sup>150</sup> The numerous local authorities will be aggregates of the national whole, now that regional planning has been abolished. This is unlike the situation in other western European countries, such as Germany and France, where regional planning exists in between national and local concerns.<sup>151</sup>

Therefore the politics of scale is an important dimension of climate change governance. We must remember that climate change involves a complex framework of local, regional, national and global actors across different functions. This framework has been politicised in recent decades, just like planning itself. If urban policy under neo-liberalism has been characterised by re-scaling then it follows that policies related to sustainable urbanism, which are themselves delivered by urban planning and policy, have also faced re-scaling.

Work to date on scale and urban sustainability policy has been thoroughly researched by Harriet Bulkeley and colleagues.<sup>152</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill argued that previous conceptualisations of space under the ‘new localism’ framework, in which the locale was a socio-spatial container that, within itself, could realise all the answers for a sustainable future, was too narrow a focus and limiting the understanding of the ways in which “wider social, economic and political processes serve to configure

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<sup>147</sup> K. Shaw and K. Theobald, ‘Resilient Local Government and Climate Change Interventions in the UK’, *International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 16.1 (2011), 1–15.

<sup>148</sup> Lombardi and others.

<sup>149</sup> Bulkeley; Drexhage and Murphy.

<sup>150</sup> Davoudi and Madanipour, ‘Localism and Neo-Liberal Governmentality’.

<sup>151</sup> See for example the French *Departments* and the German *Länder*

<sup>152</sup> Bulkeley. Bulkeley and Betsill, ‘Rethinking Sustainable Cities: Multilevel Governance and the “Urban” Politics of Climate Change’.

the possibilities of urban sustainability in general, and of climate change responses in particular”.<sup>153</sup> While the local can be a powerful and dynamic position from which to enable action, it is by no means the only one, and mirroring Purcell’s critique, it is always dependent on other tiers and sites of analysis.<sup>154</sup>

The politics of the scalar construction of urban sustainability has also been discussed. Whitehead notes how the political aspects of what urban sustainability might be have been relegated.<sup>155</sup> They argue “such work has tended to reduce the analysis of sustainable urban development to a technical matter of institutional restructuring, traffic management, architectural design and the development of green technologies”. Under a similarly post-political framework, sustainability has been seen as a neutral and rational application of technologies to reach a certain balanced position of sustainable economic growth. This has resulted in technocratic models and wish-lists.<sup>156</sup> For example, Raco has shown how the sustainability planning of the London 2012 Games and legacy demonstrated an idea of governing for sustainability that was based on compartmentalised outcomes and key performance indicators.<sup>157</sup>

Many policies have been subject to ‘policy transfer, whereby it is assumed that what works in one urban place, will work with another.’<sup>158</sup> For example, consultancies such as McKinsey frequently send email updates about “sustainable cities”, with explanations about their approach to eco-cities that are wrought with assumptions about places and filled with case studies. But these are disconnected from the global, international and national contexts in which localities are framed.<sup>159</sup> Nothing more typifies this a-scalar thinking than for example the three interlocking circles development triad, which argues that sustainable development is the result of the balance between economic, social and environmental spheres of activity, that has become so widespread – ironically across multiple scales and places, and yet without consideration of politics and scale. As such they silence material and discursive struggles over what is meant by sustainability.<sup>160</sup> We could argue, then, that in practice sustainable urban

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<sup>153</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, ‘Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change’. p. 137.

<sup>154</sup> Purcell.

<sup>155</sup> M. Whitehead, ‘(Re)Analysing the Sustainable City: Nature, Urbanisation and the Regulation of Socio-Environmental Relations in the UK.’, *Urban Studies*, 40.7 (2003).

<sup>156</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, ‘Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change’. *ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’.

<sup>158</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’; Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’; Erik Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Planning Theory: Conceptual Challenges for Planning Theory*, ed. by Jean Hillier and Patsy Healey (Ashgate, 2010), pp. 299 – 320.

<sup>159</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, ‘Rethinking Sustainable Cities: Multilevel Governance and the “Urban” Politics of Climate Change’.

<sup>160</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

policies, if we are not careful, can fall into the same trap as localism; that sustainability becomes a hollowed-out discourse that masks underlying conflicts over resources.<sup>161</sup>

Taking a multi-scalar approach to sustainable urbanism is one of the ways in which we can overcome a simplification of policy. By opening the scalar complexity of socio-environmental systems, and the policies that seek to govern them, we can push back against some of the more simplistic models of sustainable urbanism that exist, such as the eco-city. As we will show, the London Legacy Development Corporation's plans for the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP), certainly demonstrate an a-scalar and technocratic approach to the sustainable cities narrative, which is not radical enough to enable real change, despite its branding and marketing. We will explore this critique in a later chapter.

Bulkeley and Betsill identify certain areas of research that need to be expanded upon. One particular area requiring more research related to localism is intra-urban scales such as neighbourhoods and communities.<sup>162</sup> That is not to fall into a local trap of viewing these scales as primary in climate change action, but rather to highlight how, outside of the formal bounds of governance, local communities are pursuing neighbourhood agendas which make them more resilient to external shocks and threats, both economic and environmental.<sup>163</sup> The Transition Towns movement, while focusing on towns, has had a global influence, highlighting the trans-national networks of knowledge exchange discussed earlier. Transition Towns seek to transition towards self-sufficiency and resilience by gradually developing a zero-carbon economy (or as much as is possible) and removing dependency on oil. As we will see later, our empirical example of the Jubilee Greenway operates as a multi-scalar corridor, simultaneously connecting within and between neighbourhoods.

Thus we can see that far from there being an ideal scale at which to plan and govern for sustainability, governance needs to become more adaptive to the increased complexity that the inherent multi-scalar problems of governing for climate change present. We will use this framework to show how in planning for sustainable cities, planners need frameworks that give them the ability to work at multiple scales and across boundaries. If the Localism Act is central to urban planning, and if urban planning is pushing for 'sustainable development', we must critically interrogate these policies. The reality of outcomes in recent decades would suggest that localism is not sufficient without regional, national and international cooperation, as Bulkeley and others have shown.<sup>164</sup> In addition our work advances Bulkeley and Betsill's assertion that it is necessary to look further at the scalar dimensions

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<sup>161</sup> Loftus.

<sup>162</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, 'Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change'.

<sup>163</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, 'Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change'.

<sup>164</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, 'Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change'; Cohen and McCarthy.

of splintered urbanisms and takes a view of the local which accommodates a multi-scalar view of the interaction between governance and infrastructure.<sup>165</sup>

The abolition of regionalism, the increase in capacity variance between authorities, and the promotion of neighbourhood planning as a result of the Localism Act, make it more difficult to do more-than-local sustainability planning.<sup>166</sup> This therefore requires us to question what aspects of sustainable development are most appropriate at what scale. Cross-boundary working is vital for many projects that contribute to sustainable urbanism, yet some dimensions of sustainability for example local allotments, can remain intimate local issues. We must therefore look at the relationship between scales of planning and the types of sustainability that are being advocated, rather than simply suggesting that the three aspects of the sustainable development model can be applied equally at all scales. We shall do this in chapter four.

### 1.4.2.2 *Sustainability and the natural*

In considering the types of sustainability that are being advocated, it has been argued that our visions of sustainable balance are rooted in different philosophies of the natural which in turn come back to how we understand the natural world and its relationship to humanity. In theorising nature the most basic distinction as noted by Smith, is whether we conceptualise it as an external object, or whether we consider ourselves as part of it.<sup>167</sup> Following this distinction are the value systems we ascribe to nature, which determines our relation to it if it is external, or to ourselves if we are part of it. Two main value systems have been identified: intrinsic and instrumental.<sup>168</sup> An instrumental approach values nature as something that is required for human survival. An intrinsic approach to nature values it as having non-utility value. Within this there are further sub-values such as zoocentrism, sentientism and eco-centrism, each justifying intrinsic value according to different objects and principles.<sup>169</sup> Determining whether one ascribes instrumental or intrinsic, is often done by the thought experiment, the “last man” test.<sup>170</sup> Under this test we are invited to consider that if there was one person left alive on earth and had used all natural resources to survive, that if this is deemed morally objectionable then the thinker believes in the intrinsic value of nature. If one finds this a rational approach, they should consider themselves instrumentalists in how they value nature. Eco-modernism and sustainable development discourse can be viewed as instrumental, in that the definition of

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<sup>165</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, ‘Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change’. p. 140.

<sup>166</sup> Gallent, Iqbal and Manuela.

<sup>167</sup> Loftus; Neil Smith, ‘The Production of Nature’, in *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 34–65.

<sup>168</sup> Carter.

<sup>169</sup> Carter.

<sup>170</sup> R. Sylvan Routley, ‘Is There a Need for a New Environmental Ethic?’, in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, ed. by M. Zimmerman (New Jersey: Prentice- Hall Inc, 1998), pp. 17–25.

sustainability is fundamentally about the survival of the human species. We must leave enough natural resources around for us to use for future survival. The intrinsic value of nature becomes of secondary importance.

Despite the dominance of the instrumental approach, the intrinsic value of nature is highlighted in political justifications of environmental protection that go beyond sustainability. In many cases, these have little to do with carbon footprints or conservation, but serve to raise awareness and/or make people identify more with the natural world. Put simply, people like parks, green spaces, animals, plants and flowers, not because they are quantifiably sustainable but because they are just pleasant, calming or good for their wellbeing.<sup>171</sup> In the Olympic park the landscaping and urban planning has drawn on the current trend in landscape design of wild flower planting, giving the impression the landscape is being given over to the natural. Particularly in cities, there exists a need for citizens to feel the need to get “back to nature”, whether by retreating to a wilderness, by visiting an urban park or their back garden. Latour has noted that humans have simultaneously become more enmeshed with the fabric of the natural world through our increasing materialism, yet fail to acknowledge this relationship and prefer to see the problem of nature as external to ourselves. This he argues is the existence of two distinct and contradictory notions which lie at the heart of contemporary discourses on sustainability.<sup>172</sup>

In contemporary debates about the value of nature, policy positions are often deemed as being more eco-centric or more anthropocentric.<sup>173</sup> Eco-centrism values nature intrinsically, and anthropocentrism instrumentally. Eco-centrism advocates that all nature has non-utility value and should be protected without rational use-value justifications, whereas anthropocentrism views nature as helpful for humankind’s continuing survival on earth.<sup>174</sup> In policy terms, this division has significant implications for planning: what do we protect and promote as part of sustainability planning and why? The scalar aspects to the eco-anthro divide, have been documented for example by Hein *et. al.* who note that levels of eco-centrism and anthropocentrism vary, depending on the scalar geography of the particular environmental service in question.<sup>175</sup> One could argue that there are highly eco-centric notions behind green belt policy in England. Building on the greenbelt generates hostile opposition often on the grounds of protecting the natural environment (see for example the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England) despite the fact that there is nothing natural about large tracts of the green belt, that it is difficult to access and physically use, and that agriculture on the greenbelt is not a ‘natural’

<sup>171</sup> Jamie Anderson, “‘Living in a Communal Garden’ Associated with Well-Being While Reducing Urban Sprawl by 40%: A Mixed-Methods Cross-Sectional Study’, *Frontiers in Public Health*, 3.July (2015), 1–14

<sup>172</sup> Bruno Latour, “‘Fifty Shades of Green’: Bruno Latour on the Ecomodernist Manifesto’, *Entitle Blog - A Collaborative Writing Project on Political Ecology*, 2015 <<https://entitleblog.org/2015/06/27/fifty-shades-of-green-bruno-latour-on-the-ecomodernist-manifesto/>> [accessed 10 October 2016].

<sup>173</sup> Carter; Lombardi and others.

<sup>174</sup> Carter.

<sup>175</sup> L. Hein and others, ‘Spatial Scales, Stakeholders and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services’, *Ecological Economics*, 57.2 (2006).

economic condition consideration the farming subsidies given by the European Union. This is not to suggest that we should build on the greenbelt, but that rather that it's a good example of an object that has been given almost 'mythical' status regarding its intrinsic worth. Furthermore, if we then assess the greenbelt according to the three interlinked circle model of sustainable development, the greenbelt fails on social sustainability; as Cheshire argues greenbelt policies are a major contributing factor to housing inequality in the Southeast of England through restricting supply.<sup>176</sup>

Urban planning is a discipline which has been highly susceptible to biological metaphors since its beginning as a modern profession. We know that Geddes, Howard, Garner, Fritsch, Soria Y Mata and many more, looked to the natural world for inspiration about how cities could replicate biological harmony. As such, metaphors such as the cell, the lung, the eco-city, the green belt have been influential. More recently, cybernetic theories have given rise to view of cities as networked, centre-less cybercities, where the lines between nature, culture, technology and society are interwoven and co-dependent as a socio-technical system. Such metaphors are underpinned by scalar understanding of the world, whether they are nested in a hierarchy or in a more complex and ambiguous network. The field of urban political ecology for example, tends to talk about cities through various metaphors, such as the 'socio-natural assemblage'.<sup>177</sup> This conception of the city more closely acknowledges the fact that cities are incredibly complex socio-technical and human-environmental systems which co-evolve to create the particular character and aspects of place.<sup>178</sup>

Given such pressing needs for cities to tackle climate change now, it is the more romantic or simplistic metaphors we must caution against such as the 'eco-city', when cities need policies and plans that help make them resilient and adaptable to future environmental changes. This thesis argues that understanding the complexity of human-environment interactions through urban space without metaphors such as the 'eco-city' or 'green belt', is more likely to help us achieve a form of urban planning that is more linked to the reality of everyday life in cities.

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<sup>176</sup> Paul Cheshire, 'Greenbelt Myth Is the Driving Force behind the Housing Crisis', *LSE Blog: British Politics and Policy*, 2013.

<sup>177</sup> Loftus.

<sup>178</sup> Matthew Gandy, 'Cyborg Urbanization : Complexity and Monstrosity in the Contemporary City', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29.March (2005), 26–49.



## 1.5 Research Framework and questions

In the previous section we considered scale, localism and sustainability in urban policy. We discussed them briefly and provided a description of how they can both be seen through the lenses of *scale* and *the natural*. We now present a research framework that shows that localism and sustainable urbanism are both linked through these concepts, both having scalar articulations and both being concerned with the natural. This research rests on the historical and philosophical evidence that shows that there has been both a conflation and separation of scale and the natural in urban planning from the late nineteenth century to the present day. We demonstrate how through an analysis of policy and design that the QEOP and the Jubilee Greenway reflect this divergence between two types of planning for nature under particular governance regimes. We show how in this case, policies of localism from the Localism Act have impacted upon sustainable design strategies. In light of this we seek to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways has the relationship between *the natural* and *scale* influenced urban planning from late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present?
2. What are the challenges in planning for sustainable urbanism under a localist governance agenda?
3. How is sustainability framed at different scales of planning policy in East London?
4. How does the case of the Greenway in East London demonstrate the physical outcomes of sustainability policy under localism and its associated challenges?

## 1.6 Selection of research sites

### 1.6.1.1 *London*

London contains many unique features through which localism and sustainability can be analysed. Firstly, London has a challenging governance landscape with 33 unitary planning authorities, strategically influenced by the Mayor of London's *London Plan*. This provides significant challenges for cross-boundary planning in a metropolis, but is also a good way of looking at the divergent effects of localism between planning authorities. For example the planning authority and Urban Development Corporation (UDC) of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP), the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), has vastly more powerful planning capacities than the neighbouring four boroughs that cover the existing city – The London Borough of Newham (LBN), The London Borough of Hackney, The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and the London Borough of Waltham

Forest. This has created some political tensions in how the QEOP connects with the surrounding city, which in particular are starkly highlighted along the Jubilee Greenway, a pedestrian-cycle way that bisects three of the planning authorities.

Secondly, London was home to one of the largest and ambitious plans in recent years to create a sustainable city within the existing city: the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. If this piece of new city represents the latest thinking in sustainable urban planning on the scale of neighbourhood, it is a good reflection on one type of sustainability planning that we can compare against others. As the site has been planned by an arms-length Mayoral Development Corporation, it raises significant questions about the governance and the role of ongoing regeneration projects in the context of the Localism Act, particularly when inserted into an existing piece of city. In addition the LLDC demonstrates just one of the ways in which organisations such as UDCs are symptomatic of today's neo-liberal yet multi-scalar planning environment.

As a metropolis, London has had a long history of experimentation to combat environmental and social problems through planning mechanisms, whether in dealing with neighbourhood problems or in dealing with the structure of the city-region. Indeed, many of the most well-known planning tools for managing industrial urbanisation were tried and tested first in London, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Thus there is a rich theoretical history, which also has practical significance for the planning of London today, and many of London's old geographical, political and social planning problems haven't gone away.

As a world city, London contains many scalar challenges for the study of localism and sustainable urban planning.<sup>179</sup> Sitting in Western Europe, it is also home to major flows of capital and contains extreme levels of social inequality akin to the 19th century.<sup>180</sup> It remains to be seen whether localism can therefore provide better access to planning services in a city of transient flows, cultural and linguistic barriers, and major social inequality.

### 1.6.1.2 *East London*

This research was set mostly in the borough of Newham and the QEOP. However these areas are part of a wider geographical, economic and cultural space which we can call East London. According to the London Plan, the sub-region of 'East' comprises seven boroughs north of the Thames, and three boroughs below it. These are: Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich, Hackney, Havering, Lewisham, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. There are two additional layers

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<sup>179</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton University Press, 2013).

<sup>180</sup> Richard Webber and Roger Burrows, 'Life in an Alpha Territory: Discontinuity and Conflict in an Elite London "village"', *Urban Studies*, 53.15 (2016), 1–16

of planning and governance that have shaped the economic development of East London: the Thames Gateway and the Growth Boroughs.

The Thames Gateway exists as a central government led regional regeneration scheme that encompassed parts of Greater London, Essex and Kent and is home to three million people.<sup>181</sup> It is defined by its geography – sitting on either side of the Thames Estuary – and the legacy of the former industries located there. The Thames Gateway regeneration area has existed since the 1990s and we cannot think about planning, growth and regeneration in East London without considering the ambitions associated with the Thames Gateway. Funds that had been earmarked for Thames Gateway were diverted to help support the Olympic Legacy when London was announced as the host in 2005. Thus the Olympic Legacy was delivered within an ongoing planning strategy of para-regional development and the recognition of a need to transform the wider Thames Estuary.

Another layer of planning that is significant to the context of this research is the Growth Boroughs. Initially called the ‘Host Boroughs’, they became the six Growth Boroughs following the Games, with the intention for them to be the subject of intense focus on investment and development. These boroughs are being used as the benchmark for quantitative performance indicators assessing the effects of the legacy programme, owing to their geographic proximity to the site of the Games, and their relative socio-economic deprivation. The concept of ‘convergence’ is the name for the overarching performance indicators used to measure the legacy of the Games; by 2031, the key socio-economic indicators for each of these boroughs should be at the London average, whereas now, they all demonstrate rates of social exclusion and deprivation higher than average, and in some cases, are among the highest in England. Again, like the Thames Gateway, our research is within a Growth Borough, so indicators around health, well-being and social outcomes will be under scrutiny in coming years. In addition, it is in these boroughs where economic and population growth in London is expected to be highest in the next two decades. Thus they provide opportunities for planners to lock-in new ways of thinking about urban growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a point we must consider when we think about the failure of the Jubilee Greenway upgrade in Newham.

Finally, a more fluid understanding of East London has been at work in the urban imagination for centuries.<sup>182</sup> London is commonly known as a city that runs along a class axis, with middle and upper classes in the West and working classes in the East. While this is a gross simplification owing to both economic transformations since the 1970s and other forms of identity politics such as ethnicity playing a role in understanding London’s cultural geography, it is still very much a powerful and effective narrative in shaping physical aspects of the city. It can be found in marketing and

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<sup>181</sup> Allmendinger and Haughton, ‘Soft Spaces, Fuzzy Boundaries, and Metagovernance: The New Spatial Planning in the Thames Gateway’; Brownill and Carpenter.

<sup>182</sup> Paul Newland, *The Cultural Construction of London’s East End: Urban Iconography, Modernity and the Spatialisation of Englishness* (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodopi, 2008).

advertising, from both the formal institutions responsible for the legacy and from developers and shopping centres, as they represent East London life before, during and after the Games.

As the wider London economy grows, and as the demand for both housing and land increases, it is likely that gentrification will expand eastwards. The ‘great tear’ in the fabric of London, the Lea Valley,<sup>183</sup> has been a physical symbol of the lack of gentrification into Newham, but this is now finally happening as rents and house prices in Hackney and Tower Hamlets continue to rise. As such our research is concerned with a borough that is likely to see a wave of gentrifiers in coming years who, if standard models of gentrification apply, will begin to improve public amenities and demand better and higher quality urban environments, albeit with questionable outcomes for existing residents.

### 1.6.1.3 *Stratford and the 2012 Olympic Legacy*

Within East London, Stratford is one of London’s strategic outer development areas as identified in Policy 2.16 of the *London Plan*. It is a major urban centre on one of the main radial roads out of London, and a major multi-modal transport interchange. Its centre is divided by a railway track – on the south-eastern side is Stratford “town” comprising the main road, the 1960s shopping centre and – radiating southwards and eastwards – a stock of Victorian terraced houses interspersed with post-war council housing and 1980s and 90s developments, some of which are gated. Along the main road are recent additions to London’s skyline in the new residential towers that have been built housing private luxury flats. On the north-western side of the railway track is Westfield Mall with large amounts of retail space and a “high street” running through it, at the north end of which is Stratford International station with high-speed connections to St. Pancras International in 7 minutes, and Paris and Brussels. Further north and west is the QEOP and its new residential developments comprising high-quality European-style perimeter block developments.

Before the Games both of these areas were different. Stratford town to the south was just another outer London town, with poorer transport connections than currently the case. There was less residential development in the form of new towers and brownfield development. The period in the run up to the Games saw disruption in urban space and some long terms residents felt negatively affected by the new developments.<sup>184</sup> The most dramatic changes have been to the area north of the railway track. Before 2005, this was a large area of industrial wasteland with some small business presence.<sup>185</sup> The western border of this border was the River Lea, along which were pathways used by some local residents. To the north were some productive areas such as playing fields and allotments. A large area

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<sup>183</sup> Design for London, *Stitching the Fringe: Working around the Olympic Park*, 2012; Mann.

<sup>184</sup> Conversations with Sandra Jones and Ross Butler

<sup>185</sup> Raco and Tunney.

of railway sidings has now been dismantled and built over by the QEOP. Electricity pylons have also been demolished and the cables buried.

As such there has been a dramatic effect on Stratford town which has in the space of less than a decade seen both a new urban development and vast public park built right next to it, plus the opening of several new railway connections. While ‘old’ Stratford is therefore part of the existing urban fabric of London, it has been argued that a new piece of city has been inserted into this fabric. An attempt has been made to “stitch the tear” in the urban fabric, linking Hackney with Stratford through streets, blocks and parkland.

A key component of this development was the establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation, the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). The LLDC has planning powers just like any local authority would, has leased land to developers and can impose design codes and regulations across the site. It has created a flexible masterplan for the area’s longer term development.<sup>186</sup> Within its boundary, a diverse range of residential development will take place from low-rise terraces, townhouses and mews dwellings, to the already-existing high density perimeter block developments which were built as part of the Athletes’ Village. The key priority now for the LLDC is to turn the area into a liveable place, by increasing the population which can support amenities such as shops, cafes, bars and leisure facilities.

There have been many critiques of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, which often specifically concern the way in which the LLDC has emerged as a major custodian of development in the area. These criticisms have ranged from the accusation that the organisational structure and processes of local engagement have led to a “democratic deficit”, to the QEOP not being connected enough to the surrounding urban grain, for example that the controversial ‘blue wall’, which was erected after the games as the site’s barrier, has left a legacy of physical exclusion. Despite this the LLDC and others involved in the process would argue that such substantial development will always come with these temporal and spatial challenges and that the sheer scale and complexity of this transformation should be recognised.

Nevertheless, the physical manifestation of the legacy has been largely contained within the LLDC area, despite the assertions that the legacy is meant to transform ‘East London’. The difference between these two concepts of transformation rests primarily on the fact that the QEOP can be physically realised, while ‘East London’ is based on a transformation of less visible socio-economic indicators. It remains to be seen, then, whether the physical transformation of the heart of the legacy area – the QEOP – can in any way be linked to wider social outcomes across East London. The QEOP could impact socio-economic indicators through direct measures such as providing better sporting

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<sup>186</sup> Juliet Davis, ‘A Promised Future and the Open City: Issues of Anticipation in Olympic Legacy Designs’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 18.4 (2014).

facilities, green infrastructure, well-being and better jobs. Or it could have indirect benefits, for example being a catalyst for wider improvements outside of the QEOP area. In either case, a major point of contention amongst critics has been that socio-economic indicators may show improvement in the local population in coming years, but this may largely be due to displacement of poorer residents by ones who bring their better socio-economic indicators into the Growth Boroughs, therefore masking the effects of the legacy on specific individuals and livelihoods. The section of the Greenway that we are concerned about in this thesis is a strong example of this tension between transforming the QEOP versus the transformation of a wider part of East London.

### 1.6.1.4 *Jubilee Greenway and northern outfall sewer*

The section of the Jubilee Greenway (herein known as the Greenway) between Victoria Park and Beckton is both the physical and conceptual spine that opens out the question of localist planning for sustainable urban design in a complex metropolis. This section of the Greenway is the longest uninterrupted pedestrian route in East London at over five kilometres long. The route runs atop of the structure of the Northern Outfall Sewer which is raised in an earthwork some five metres above the surrounding topography at Stratford, and then gradually sinks down to level with the surrounding terrain. The Greenway is segregated from surrounding streets and other rights of way throughout its length, and can only be accessed via periodic access points along its route. One must know where these points are, and how to get on and off, a bit like a motorway.

Following an extensive survey of local projects in and around the Olympic park, this site of analysis was chosen following an email exchange with the architectural practice of Adams and Sutherland, and an urban walk along the Greenway with an architect at Allies and Morrison who have both worked on projects around the Olympic Park. From these exchanges it became clear that Adams and Sutherland had been working with a group of stakeholders on an upgrade of the Greenway which would have brought it into greater multi-functional use. After the abolition of the London Development Agency, the funding stream and project planning for the upgrade was lost. What remained was a section of the Greenway that had been upgraded and landscaped as part of the run-up to the Olympic Games in the London Legacy Development Corporation area only. The upgrade did not continue along the Greenway into the area managed by Newham Council. This was crystallised in an urban walk, where I took a photograph which demonstrated this sharp divergence of landscape architecture along the Greenway. In the LLDC area, the grass was carefully managed and maintained, with art-works, seating, litter bins and landscaping, making the place far more appealing and interesting. This high-quality area suddenly gave way to its opposite – poorly maintained, overgrown, littered and unpleasant landscape. When I cross-referenced this point on a map, it turned out to be the boundary

between the London Borough of Newham and the LLDC, with the high-quality green space falling under the LLDC area, nearest to the QEOP, and the low-quality greenspace falling under the London Borough of Newham (LBN).

It seemed strange, that a linear Greenway should not be managed as a whole, but fragmented into two halves because of the nuances of governance at the local level. It spoke to a sustainable urban planning that was beset by a governance landscape of decreasing intra-borough co-ordination, an extremely intense area-based initiative (the LLDC area), surrounding by a morphologically complex landscape, and set within a socially diverse part of London. The potential for the Greenway to be central to the eastern development of London seemed crucial, and thus it seemed that through the tinkering of localist urban policy, a major opportunity for East London had been lost. Therefore, of all the other projects in and around the sustainable Olympic park that could have been studied, this one had the clearest expression of the impact of localist policies on sustainable urban design, with such grand consequences.

The potential of the Greenway to support future sustainable development is enormous. The Greenway is a multi-functional green space first and foremost. Walking along it, one notices an array of activities: walking dogs, strolling, jogging, drawing and painting, roller skating, lingering, sitting, and cycling. There are also some community events on the Greenway run by Plaistow Big Local community group. The surface of the Greenway is very wide, enough for four lanes of traffic. Its sides decline steeply as grassy verges. It is long and straight in most places providing clear lines of sight so that cycles can gain speed. There is so much space along the Greenway that it could be easily converted into an inter-borough street, with space for housing, and even a bus route. Adams and Sutherland architects were commissioned to do a Wider Greenway Strategy from 2008 onwards which would form the basis of the Greenway's upgrade. As the many interconnected social and environmental interventions in their study had shown, there is huge potential for it to act as a new functional, better used and better connected green corridor within the existing city.

In addition to the potential of the site, the selection of this site above others in the area was also based on the fact that at a larger scale, the form of the Greenway contrasts with the form of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP). The layout of the QEOP is circular, inward and has clear centres and margins, symbolised by the siting of both architectural icons and open spaces within it. The Greenway, although cutting through the QEOP, is linear and it provides a point of reference for describing urban design as linear and connected, versus bounded and inward-facing.

### 1.7 Structure of Dissertation

#### 1.7.1 Chapter Two: Methods

In this chapter we set out the methods used in this research. We deploy various methods on the basis that there is no singular unifying methodology that can capture the complexity of urban processes. We discuss some of the key issues using our selected methods which are primarily site-based analysis and policy analysis. In addition we consider their relative strengths and weaknesses.

#### 1.7.2 Chapter Three: Scale and the natural in urban planning

In this chapter we explore the shared concepts of scale and nature which cut across theories of sustainability and localism. In addition we bring in the first empirical examples from the research to illustrate the theoretical discussion. We argue that in the field of urban planning both localism and sustainability are often based on variegated and intersecting ontologies of scale and the natural. We first unpack scale and reflect upon the ‘scalar debates’ and demonstrate how scale is being used in the language of the Localism Act. Secondly, we look at the problem of planning cities and how this has been inextricably bound-up with the fundamental relationship between ‘the urban’ and ‘the natural’. We show these have scalar dimensions, and that planning for the natural, or sustainability, is always done over a particular scale or scales. Demonstrating this allows us to move beyond the post-political model of ‘sustainable development’ which masks the different ways sustainability is manifested over particular scales of governance and planning.

#### 1.7.3 Chapter Four: Multi-scalar sustainable policy planning in East London

We continue with the premise from chapter three in which sustainability policy varies according to varying scales of planning. If we look beyond the surface of sustainable development discourse we find that the weight given to economic, social and environmental sustainability varies. We argue in this chapter that this is due to the inherent strategic tensions between different scales of planning from the national, the metropolitan to the local. We first recount the recent history of planning policy, particularly in relation to neo-liberalism. We then conduct an analysis of four policy documents situated at the aforementioned scales of planning. Using the methodological precedent of Lombardi *et al.*<sup>187</sup>, we attempt to plot our plans upon a grid of socio-economic equality versus level of eco-centrism. In doing this we are able to show how planning for sustainability in East London is not aligned, owing to the competing forms of sustainability advocated. To show how this is shaped and is shaped by physical space, the following two chapters turn to the urban context of East London.

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<sup>187</sup> Lombardi and others.



#### **1.7.4 Chapter Five: East London and the 2012 Olympic legacy: socio-economic and physical transformations**

In this chapter we work at the scale of East London. We introduce the general urban context and introduce the 2012 Olympic legacy promises and the policy of ‘convergence’. We use census data around deprivation to show how the Eastern boroughs are among the most deprived in the country. We show how successive attempts to regenerate East London both at a variety of scales, have created a particularly fragmented urban grain in combination with infrastructure development in the last 150 years. We show how this has been linked to the East’s cultural perception, particularly through the lenses of social class, as a difficult place to manage. We bring in more empirical evidence through stories of living through change in Stratford, and present photographic evidence of some of the main themes discussed. We then show that there is a disconnection between the policies of a ‘sustainable regeneration’ through convergence, and physical planning with a lack of a spatial understanding of East London’s socio-spatial issues. We conclude this chapter by presenting the Greenway as a potential social and connective infrastructure that can improve the disconnection between policy and physical space.

#### **1.7.5 Chapter Six: Localism and sustainable urban development along the Greenway**

In this chapter we show how the upgrade of the Greenway to make it more used as a multi-functional social and connective space was beset the by the Localism Act. We first review the history of greenspace planning in London, before describing the history of the Greenway and its current ownership and management. We then introduce the Adams and Sutherland Wider Vision Study of 2010 which set out a full-scale upgrade of this intra-borough traffic-free route. We demonstrate then how key clauses of the Localism Act contributed to the plan’s demise. We go into more detail about uses along the Greenway, and how they relate to questions of sustainability and scale. We then question the future of the Greenway from the perspective of neighbourhood, local authority, metropolitan and national strategic tensions. As such we show how a physical site is in a dialectical relationship with policy formation in that while policy has affected the site, we can use the physical to read policy outcomes from the ground up and potentially create new policies in this way.

#### **1.7.6 Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

Our conclusion is in three parts. In the first part we summarise each chapter of the thesis. In the second part we address the questions set out in this introduction drawing on the evidence found throughout our various chapters. Lastly, we briefly consider the thesis relation to the future of localism in England, justice and the relationship between policy and physical space.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Introduction

This research uses multiple methods commonly used in architectural research, recognising that there is no singular method alone that can sufficiently describe, analyse and explain the complex phenomena inherent to urban life. Specific methods were however utilised when seeking to understand different dimensions of policy, design and space in and around our site. Below we will describe the methods deployed and discuss their relative strengths and weaknesses. Firstly we have deployed a range of site-based analyses, and secondly we have worked in interpreting policy documents and semi-structured interviews.

### 2.2 Site-based analysis

In *Death and Life of Great American Cities* Jane Jacobs developed an urban methodology in response to rapid changes in how planners were shaping New York and other cities in the west. Jacobs' approach was one of the first in planning to attempt to overcome rationalistic discourses and look at how lived experience of the city can reveal a more nuanced knowledge of how cities work. If we looked at cities in this manner, we could plan them better she argued. In the introduction to *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she wrote

the scenes that illustrate this book are all about us. For illustrations, please look closely at real cities. While you are looking, you might as well also listen, linger and think about what you see.<sup>188</sup>

Jacob's notion of "real cities" comes to light from a closer reading of the entire text. The main argument running through Jacob's work was that cities are best understood from street level, and the experiences that people living in them have. She argues throughout that cities work best when planners do not attempt to impose abstract and idealistic plans onto them, and instead should focus on the ways in which cities shape and are shaped by everyday life. Metaphors abound in her work relating to the lived reality of the urban environment, for example the "ballet of the street" to describe the ways in which the seemingly chaotic movements along city streets are actually patterns and order emerge out from the seeing chaos; the systems of negotiation where individuals respond to obstacles in the street, whether people or objects, are akin to a complex ballet. Her contrasting notions of

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<sup>188</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), chap. Preface.

‘cataclysmic money’ and ‘slow money’ are used to describe the way in which rapid urban development brought by high finance often brings a form of redevelopment which is antithetical to her ideal of small blocks and old buildings, which inherently generate urban life. Lastly, her metaphor of “eyes on the street” implies that a street with lots of windows which face onto the street provide natural surveillance from the people living in the buildings who can see what’s happening in the street, and from the self-regulation people in the street demonstrate through never knowing when they are being watched. In order to achieve “eyes on the street,” buildings should define streets and be at least two storeys in height. The tenement districts of the Greenwich Village where she lived inspired her thinking in this manner.<sup>189</sup> These metaphors are just some of the ways in which we can see how her methods were based on street level interactions and the experience of people in cities, rather than distant planners’ work with maps, plans and diagrams alone.

Jacobs’ term “real cities” is an attempt to express a “real” knowledge generated from an intimate familiarity with how cities work from the ground up, rather than through abstract representations. Whittemore has argued that Jacobs was working in a phenomenological tradition as evidenced by her assertion of the importance of both individual experience and interpretation.<sup>190</sup> For Whittemore, a phenomenological approach to planning would mean that

planning would encourage planners to note what objects in their communities have meaning, and how different frames of reference give meanings to each object. A house is not a technological construction but is imbued with meaning: dwelling, place, and environment. [This] approach would take as a given that perceived problems and preferred methods vary between planners and constituents.<sup>191</sup>

Acknowledging that individuals and communities will have a variety of different interpretations of their own environments has implications for how planners and urban researchers understand the city. Thus, as we move forward, we also understand “the local” as something that is not ontologically fixed, but contested through different actors in urban space.

The second half of Jacobs’ quotation above is more directly related to methods. Jacobs encourages us to “linger, listen and think about what you see”. We can interpret this method as rooted in the fact that we understand the world primarily through our senses and through being in a place: lingering, listening, and seeing. For urban researchers, this opens up the possibility of doing research by engaging with and moving through space at the ground level, and using our basic senses to comprehend and make sense of the urban scene from the level of the street, instead of the bird’s eye

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<sup>189</sup> Jane Jacobs.

<sup>190</sup> Andrew Whittemore, ‘Phenomenology and City Planning’, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 2014, 1–8

<sup>191</sup> Whittemore, p. 4.

view which is often taken by planners and policy-makers.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, we can use walking, note talking, photography, observation, participation and any other methods that involve us physically being in the urban setting. A discussion of these and some examples of their use in this research now follows.

### 2.2.1 Walking

Many scholars have written about walking as a method.<sup>193</sup> In particular, practices like walking break down the notion that we walk as objective beings through subjective space.<sup>194</sup> Rather, as we walk, we simultaneously contribute to a re-working of that space. This holds true for all human presence in social space. For example, someone sitting quietly on a bench conducting observation and taking notes, cannot pretend that they are not, by sitting on a bench, contributing to how that space is being used. The very presence of the researcher may modify how their ‘subjects’ behave. Perhaps a group of children will act differently in the distant presence of an adult. Or perhaps an elderly person who would sit down on a bench to rest would no longer do so as it is occupied by a researcher. Thus, our presence changes the space around us to the point where we are unable to value space as objectively separate and detached from our being and are forced to think of ourselves as co-subjects in space. Walking, then, is no different, and as walkers we are engaging with and also producing space. As such, as Rendell notes “Walking is a way of at once discovering and transforming the city”.<sup>195</sup>

Walking is a method which can help us to overcome seeing the city purely through representations such as maps, which influence how we understand and make use of urban space. De Certeau has famously used the example of Manhattan to talk about the ways in which a city can look orderly from above but chaotic from street level. He uses the metaphor of the World Trade Centre, whereby looking from its viewing tower, we can see the ordered street pattern of Manhattan, with its rectilinear blocks. As we descend further down the sky-scraper and look out onto the city, it becomes gradually more chaotic. We start to see variations in architectural styles and typologies. We see advertising billboards, traffic lights, and road signs. By the time we are at street level, we also deal with shop fronts, other pedestrians, and traffic to the point where we are feel overwhelmed by a chaotic environment. De Certeau’s point, then, was that from the ground, we can see and understand a lot more than from above. Seeing from the top down, planners and policy makers cannot see the complexities and contradictions experienced felt in people’s real lives. At the same time, they have

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<sup>192</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (London: Univ of California Press, 2011).

<sup>193</sup> P. Joseph and M. Lawhon, ‘Walking as Method: Toward Methodological Forthrightness and Comparability in Urban Geographical Research’, *The Professional Geographer*, 67.4 (2015), 655–62; T. Ingold and J. Vergunst, ‘Introduction’, in *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, ed. by T. Ingold and J. Vergunst (Basingstoke: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1–19; David Pinder, ‘Errant Paths: The Poetics and Politics of Walking’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29 (2011), 672–93

<sup>194</sup> Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place between* (London: IB Tauris, 2006)

<sup>195</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place between*, p. 190.

the power to shape the trajectories of those lives.<sup>196</sup> So it makes sense to analyse policymaking and its impacts from the street level.

Walking can also be a political act. The explorations of the political dimensions of walking were explored in the 1960s with the Situationist movement, in particular the work of Guy Debord.<sup>197</sup> The Situationists believed that the contemporary city was a spectacle of consumerism which masked serious political questions about who owned the city and the power to manipulate people in it. Debord, for example, argued that in the urban spectacle, “that which appears is good, that which is good appears”.<sup>198</sup> In order to destroy (and in the process reveal) the spectacle, the Situationists used walking as a political act. They would do this by talking *dérives* and *détournements* whilst walking through the city. This was the act of going deliberately off-route and being intuitively led down streets that one would normally take. In doing so, they disrupted what these streets were meant to be used for. In a broader sense, the influence of the Situationists has been to recognise that we can re-work the normative uses of streets and urban spaces for political means, but by using simple playful and non-violent acts. Thus walking can become a means of engaging politically with how urban space is used by challenging it through methods which allow one to transcend normative spatial boundaries both real and imagined. Walking can become a means to undermine from street level, the top-down intentions of city planners.

If one's body becomes a site of co-production with urban space, rather than being separate to it, then the type of body which is moving through space matters profoundly. Recently, a debate took place between Garrett<sup>199</sup> and Mott *et al.*<sup>200</sup> around the relative privilege that certain bodies have to enter and “discover” spaces over others. Garrett studied and participated in Urban Exploration (UrbEx) to discover abandoned buildings in cities in order to experience them and himself fully. Mott *et al.* noted how UrbExers may have been reviving geography as a male science of exploration as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the need to work in extremes.<sup>201</sup> But more presciently, they note that it is only their white and able bodies that allowed them to access such spaces in the first place. Had they been black or brown, they may have been more suspected by a racist police force, and had they been disabled, they would not have had physical access.<sup>202</sup> Thus, as we privilege walking through space as a technique of exploration and discovery, we need to keep in mind the privileges afforded to us by them in certain conditions. Thus under this research the awareness of my own body, firstly that I am able bodied, helped me appreciate issues of accessibility on the Greenway.

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<sup>196</sup> James Scott.

<sup>197</sup> Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Black & Red, U.S., 1984).

<sup>198</sup> Debord, n. 12.

<sup>199</sup> B. Garrett, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City* (London: Verso, 2013).

<sup>200</sup> C. Mott and S. Roberts, ‘Not Everyone Has (the) Balls: Urban Exploration and the Persistence of Masculinist Geography’, *Antipode*, 46.1 (2014).

<sup>201</sup> Mott and Roberts.

<sup>202</sup> Mott and Roberts.

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The three issues above then – making sense of the city, intended uses of the city, and embodiment – were all dealt with throughout my experience of taking walks in the area of my case study. The first physical encounter with the LLDC area and Newham was on foot. I had previously used Google maps to understand the area from above, but it was only from walking around the site that I was able to comprehend the urban form and social life of the area. Over the course of approximately 18 months, I ventured out to do several walks from nearby public transit stations, in a circuitous manner trying to pass through divergent areas bordering the Olympic Park – which for much of the time was closed for construction, both before and after the games. These areas were: Hackney Wick, Three Mills, Plaistow, and Stratford Town. These walks were taken at different times of day, and different seasons, allowing great variations in the atmosphere, light, temperature, and how these affected the use of the space but also my ability to engage with it.

Start and end points for each walk were set place before heading out, but usually I let curiosity take hold and deviated from my walk. This allowed me to maintain an overall structure with some flexibility. It meant that I could transcend boundaries by taking myself down divergent and quiet paths such as the overgrown path which led off from the Jubilee Greenway and into the Three Mills pumping station and recreation area. This more flexible approach generated a wealth of observational data which fed into the empirical understanding of the Greenway. For example, it was only through walking down the Greenway one afternoon and resting on a wall for quite some time that I noticed a strong line which bisected the width of the Greenway. This was demarcated by a change in the colour of the path; one side was concrete, and the other side was tarmac. This line continued into the green flanks of the Greenway, at either side of the pathway. Here, on the western side of the path, the grass was manicured, cut and clean. On the eastern side, it was overgrown, wild and full of weeds and wildflowers. This line, I later learned, was the boundary between the LLDC and LBN. This dividing line across the Greenway with two different forms of urban nature on the same linear pathway thus became one the major building blocks of this thesis. Therefore, it was lingering and thinking about what was seen, as encouraged by Jacobs, which added a significant empirical contribution to this analysis of the impacts of policy on urban space.

### **2.2.2 Observation, note-taking and photography**

The discussion above surrounding walking and its role in understanding the city is also relevant in discussing the more data-heavy processes of observation, note-taking and photography. What we choose to capture in what we see, what we note down as significant and what we frame when we take

a photograph,<sup>203</sup> are all driven by our individual perception of what we think is relevant to our emerging field notes. Whilst we are open to reading the urban landscape and being led by the unexpected, we are also influenced by ideas of cities and their aesthetic qualities instilled by visual and popular culture. As such, we also impose our understandings onto the spaces we are attempting to analyse and must be aware of this limitation when employing visual methods.

This tension between trying to generate objective data and being led by subjective understandings of the urban space is most clearly shown in comparing one form of note-taking and photography. Over two days, an attempt was made to note what the Greenway was being used for in two places. Half an hour was spent at each site, noting the uses of activities and the demographics of the people. Here, I was observing in a stationary position and watched people as they moved along the Greenway. I also recorded the direction of travel if they were walking, running or cycling, which the vast majority of people were. In the choice of time and location, I attempted to be as objective as possible, by coming at the same times of day on both days. This meant that there were four separate recording moments: once in the morning from 10 am to 10.30am and once in the afternoon from 3pm to 3.30pm. I used these times as they were both outside of possible commuting times, and outside of lunch hours – both situations I thought would skew any notion of the Greenway as being as an “everyday” space. I came here on a Friday and Saturday, so I could understand both a working and a non-working day. Once this data had been collected, I felt that I had to wait for further methods to complement its findings. On its own, the data was merely descriptive and didn’t offer any qualitative insights. Here then was an example of an attempt to impose an ordering system which revealed little more than descriptive data and needed additional context to become a useful insight.

A far more fruitful form of observation and note-taking was carried out in combination with walking. Thus, when I moved along the Greenway on one of my many walks, I noted many people and activities that were stationary, and got a sense of how the Greenway is used in different places in different ways. These different uses, when cross-referenced with a map, turned out to be directly related to what was taking place at the entry and exit points of the Greenway and the activities on offer immediately in the urban areas on either side of the Greenway. The richness and depth of information was not harnessed through stationary observation alone and so walking whilst observing was used as the primary way of understanding the Greenway in going forward. Rather than attempting to take an ‘objective’ position as an invisible / external observer, I became a ‘participant’ by walking along the Greenway, using it for its intended purpose. Shedding the position of supposed objectivity, then, resulted in more insightful observations.

This is more obviously true of photography where what is captured and in what way (e.g. composition), reflects the interaction between the photographer and the urban space around them. The

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<sup>203</sup> J Sidaway, ‘Photography as Geographical Fieldwork’, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 26.1 (2002), 95–103.

camera becomes the interface between the self and the outside world. We are not then producing photographs to tell “the truth”, but are partly creating a type of truth with our camera in urban space. Photography along the Greenway was further supported by walking. I took photographs that were of particular research and aesthetic interest. I was able to capture the use of urban space by users, barriers and fences which were of interest, different types of urban nature, a variety of residential architectures, across a very wide area. The lasting benefit of photographic evidence is that it can always be re-interpreted at a later stage after more information about the site becomes apparent.<sup>204</sup> In addition, photography offers a snapshot in time and allows one to compare how a site may have changed over time. Finally, photographs also help to bring back memories of a particular day, when perhaps going back to one’s notes does bring back experiences or sensations that may be of relevance. Thus, despite the subjective nature of photographic data, it provides a flexible and robust way of engaging with site from instigating interest, to measuring change, and to stimulating different interpretations, memories and sensory experiences of place.<sup>205</sup>

### 2.3 Discourse analysis

Site-based analysis does not offer a full enough understanding of the political issues and planning decisions which affect the Greenway. The site on its own cannot be understood without its relation to policy plans and decisions, both in the past and in the present. Therefore, a major part of the methodology of this research was based on understanding how the elements of planning – particularly around sustainability and localism – came to have an impact on the physical and lived space of the Greenway. In order to understand this, an analysis of key planning documents and interviews with officials had to be undertaken.

Discourse analysis is a widely used method across a variety of social science, literary, historical and artistic disciplines.<sup>206</sup> A discourse can be defined as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices”.<sup>207</sup> In addition, a discourse may not be known to

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<sup>204</sup> Doolittle.

<sup>205</sup> Doolittle.

<sup>206</sup> Maarten Hajer and Wytse Versteeg, ‘A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievements, Challenges, Perspectives’, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 7.3 (2005), 175–84; Keith Jacobs, ‘Discourse Analysis and Its Utility for Urban Policy Research’, *Urban Policy and Research*, 24.1 (2006), 39–52; Loretta Lees, ‘Urban Geography: Discourse Analysis and Urban Research’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 28.1 (2004), 101–7

<sup>207</sup> Keith Jacobs, p. 175.



those who are involved in its production “...Because a particular discourse has its own argumentative rationality”.<sup>208</sup>

According to Keith Jacobs, there are two main advantages to undertaking a discourse analysis. Firstly, it allows for a better understanding of ideologies and assumptions which cannot be gleaned from simply looking at say, organisational structures, relationships and decision-making processes. Secondly, it recognises the importance of language in and of itself. It can be used to show how certain language can be used to create a particular “regime of truth”, such as for example the various discourses of “sustainable urbanism”.

Lees has identified two main epistemological approaches to discourse analysis.<sup>209</sup> The first is based in political economy, which is associated with Norman Fairclough’s *critical discourse analysis* to uncover ‘discourse coalitions’ in policy.<sup>210</sup> This strand seeks to understand how language is used in shaping ideologies at the macro-level such as neo-liberalism and the ways it can be used to impose hegemony. The second is based on the work of Foucault, which argues that power is more diffuse and cannot be separated from knowledge construction. For Foucault, power is not reducible to individual agency, but works across a network of relationships between individuals and organisations. Rather than seeing language as a reflection of power relations, this approach views both language and power as mutually constitutive. The act of speaking, naming or acting is in itself an act of power.

For the purposes of analysing policy documents however, a political economy approach was used. The planning policy documents we analyse have a material impact on places as it is planning officers - those who have the ability to materially shape places - who will interpret these documents and act upon them. We also recognise that these documents are each situated within institutions with particular agendas, and have been conceived in a “discourse coalition” of governance in England, which is based around austerity and economic growth.

### 2.3.1 Policy documents

Policy documents were selected based on their relevance to the main planning policies over a particular scale of governance which could impact the Greenway (See Appendix B). Since there is a general ‘chain of conformity’ from the National Planning Policy Framework, to the London Plan and then to Local Authority plans, I conducted an analysis which sought to find out the discourses of sustainability apparent in each plan. This was based on work done by Lombardi *et al.*<sup>211</sup> who mapped

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<sup>208</sup> Keith Jacobs, p. 176.

<sup>209</sup> Lees.

<sup>210</sup> Lees; Norman Fairclough, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Policy Studies’, *Critical Policy Studies*, 7.2 (2013), 177–97

<sup>211</sup> Lombardi and others.

interviews and policy documents against an existing framework and placed them along a long an axes of y) more-less equitable and x) anthropocentric-ecocentric. However Lombardi *et al.* did not analyse planning at different scales but focused on different sectors within one area-based initiative in Birmingham. Nevertheless, utilising aspects of their approach, I was able to demonstrate that within multi-scalar planning lay serious differences in what ‘sustainability’ meant at each scale.

Fairclough advocates a three-point structure when analysing policy,<sup>212</sup> which was taken into account when analysing each document. Firstly, a *textual analysis* focusing on structure, phrasing and grammar of the text; secondly, the *discursive practice*, or the context in which statements are made and documents produced; and thirdly, the *social practice*, or a study of the discourse in relation to wider ideologies and political power. This method is reflected in the findings which have considered language used, overall text structure and a wider knowledge of the role of each plan and the political context in which they exist. Policy documents were vast, particularly the London Plan. In addition, I was interested only in how they understood sustainability. Therefore I was concerned with how sustainability is used in the text and its associations, and how the document was structured. In order to find instances of sustainability discourse, the search function [ctrl +f] was used to search for instances of sustainability in each document. With each instance highlighted in the document I was able to count the number of instances in each document and manually interpret each phrase, paragraph or section in which sustainability appeared in to understand how it was being defined and in what ways. Other key phrases were used such as ‘climate change’, ‘sustainable development’ and ‘environment’.

There are limitations to what we can learn from policy documents. Policy documents are nearly always the ‘official line’ of any organisation, but do not reveal how these official policies are implemented or their eventual outcomes. This so often comes down to the interpretations of officials, capacities to deliver and so on. For this reason, interviews were conducted to understand the alignment of official policy documents with the information given by officials under informal and semi-structured interviews.

### 2.3.2 Interviews

The interviewees could be split into two groups. The first were officials working in organisations which had produced the plans, and the second were individuals in the community around the Greenway with some stake in its use and future. The first comprised three individuals from the LLDC, two from the LBN, a former member of the GLA, and an architect related to the projects in the area. The second comprised a manager from a community café on the Greenway, and two local residents

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<sup>212</sup> Fairclough.

from Hackney Wick and Stratford Town. Interviews lasted between forty minutes to several hours, as some of them involved walking together or visiting the interviewee at home. Walking interviews offer another rich source of information, as one is able to experience space through another person's eyes.<sup>213</sup>

The aims of interviews were both to see if there were any discrepancies between policy documents, to understand relationships between organisations, and to cross-reference information given by each contact. There has been an intense amount of interest in the organisations involved in the planning and development of the QEOP and those around it such as the LBN, and there are many contentious issues that these organisations have had to deal with. Thus, it was important for me as a researcher that when making first contact and during the interview process, I did not give the impression that I was out to generate more controversy. This in turn affected the way in which interview data was gathered. I did not want to make respondents give 'official' answers as I already had this in the policy documents and so did not record most of the interviews. When being recorded it has been known for officials to give inauthentic answers for fear of controversy. Therefore notes were taken as respondents were talking and were typed up as soon as possible after the interview and filled in with any additional information from memory.

Interview questions were used as a prompt to guide the conversation in a particular direction. However I was keen for the interview to feel and be more like a conversation, so that issues that were important to respondents were brought to the fore, as much as the issues that I was interested in. This was another way of ensuring that the broader questions of my research around the development of Greenway were sound. Interviews began with an overview of the interviewee's role in the organisation, and talking about general issues before becoming more targeted towards the end of the interview. In terms of ethical considerations, only one interviewee was not happy to be named, a planner at the LBN. All interviewees will therefore be named throughout this dissertation with one exception.

## 2.4 Survey

An online survey was developed early in the research process to understand if it was worth generating a large amount of data on the use of the Greenway to find out issues to do with use, access, mobility and its future. In addition a social media page was set up on Facebook which had a link to the survey. The Facebook page and survey link were disseminated by placing a notice in local community facilities around Stratford and Hackney, with a headline to catch the attention of viewers followed by a link to the survey and my email address that people could tear off and take-away with them.

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<sup>213</sup> Monika Buescher, John Urry and Katian Witchger, *Mobile Methods* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

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Furthermore, a local contact who works in a school in Hackney disseminated it to her general studies class.

The survey had a very poor response rate and the information it provided merely supported the note-taking and observation conducting along the Greenway. Several reasons for the poor response rate are as follows. Firstly, the survey was disseminated in areas which I had assumed would generate interest – the Stratford library, the Café on the Greenway, and the Counter Café in Hackney Wick. These places are very busy spaces catering to a diverse group of people and are in different areas around the edge of the LLDC area, one of which sits on the Greenway itself. However, even if people in these places saw the poster, it is likely that between their initial interest and getting around to making contact, they lost interest. Secondly, the information on the poster may not have been clear enough or made people aware of the issue in a convincing enough manner. It cannot be known why the response rate was so low ( $n = 9$ ), but may also reflect that the Greenway as a space is not well-known in the majority of local resident's minds, which as we shall see is a significant factor in how it is treated by officials and in the politics of its future upgrade.

### 3 Scale and the natural in urban planning

#### 3.1 Introduction

Today's concern with sustainable urban planning is part of an historical legacy around the design and planning of cities in relation to the natural world. Questions inherent to designing cities for nature are part of a longer legacy which pre-dates contemporary concerns with global environmental change. This is the basic dichotomy between society and nature that was hardened during the Enlightenment and the numerous attempts since then to overcome it. There are many well-known examples in the history of urban planning which show the varying responses planners and social thinkers made for cities and their natural environments, such as, for instance, Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities model.<sup>214</sup> The vision for a regenerated East London through the development of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) is another such vision of how to deal with urban environmental problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The park itself contains greenspaces, waterways, housing, shopping, amenities, leisure facilities and attractions. The publication *Your Sustainability Guide to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park 2030* sets out a vision of an urban lifestyle within the boundaries of the park which is rooted solely around a particular understanding of sustainable urbanism. Within this vision, social and economic dimensions of a sustainable lifestyle are set within a particular urban natural landscape reminiscent of an urban idyll or an eco-topia. Surrounding the QEOP, sustainability planning focuses primarily on policy and there are no obvious representations of what sustainability is through the manipulation of the physical and/or natural environment. Here, then, are two contrasting types of sustainable urbanism within a small area, governed by separate planning authorities. This is most visible along the Greenway where the formal greenspace planning of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) suddenly gives way to a lack of landscaping for the rest of its length with the borough of Newham.

In this chapter I explore how forms of sustainable planning and governance arrangements are underpinned by particular notions of scale and the 'natural', and how these are manifest on the Greenway. To do this I consider in sections 3.2 and 3.3 the ways in which scholars have considered scale and the natural ontologically. In section 3.3 I look at how scalar understandings of the natural have influenced urban planning from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. I then reveal how planning for nature on the Greenway is currently divergent across two different typologies. In chapter 4, I am then able to show how multi-scalar policy has influenced this condition, and in chapter 6 we look in more detail at the impact of policy on the physical space of the Greenway and how this opens up a number of possible future typologies of planning for sustainable urbanism.

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<sup>214</sup> Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

### 3.2 Scalar constructions

Sustainability is inherently scalar in that it seeks to address a global problem through processes at international, national, regional, urban, local and domestic scales. Despite the seeming simplicity of these scalar relations, in reality it can be difficult for academics, policy-makers and practitioners to agree on how to categorise processes into scalar categories. Firstly, this is due to the way in which complex human-environment relations often do not conform to neat scalar categories; and secondly, because there is disagreement around what scale is, how it is measured, quantified and understood. The Localism Act is an example of a scalar policy with the use of the term “localism”. But when the Act is read through in detail and considered in relation to wider social, political and economic issues in which it is to be enacted, the question of what ‘the local’ in the Localism Act actually means becomes elusive. In order to understand how the local in the Localism Act is deployed, it is first necessary to describe the ways in which scale has been considered in recent years, particularly through the ‘scalar debates’.<sup>215</sup>

#### 3.2.1 Idealism and materialism

There have been long debates in spatial disciplines about what we mean when we talk about scale. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Geography, scale is a “level of representation; in cartography, the ratio between map distance and distance on the ground. Geographical difference is expressed at all scales, from the inter-personal to the institutional, and from the national to the international”.<sup>216</sup> Determining which tiers of scale exist (the national or the international), how they are measured and come to be, and whether scale can be conceived vertically or horizontally has led to intense debate across geography, planning and urban studies in the last twenty years. For example, the definition cited above continues, “The **politics of scale** describe the ways in which scale choices are constrained overtly by politics, and more subtly by choices of technologies, institutional designs, and measurements” [original emphasis].<sup>217</sup> Thus, scale is central to the production of geographic knowledge, but both its ontological status and its epistemological use have been subject to contestation. Here I will show the ways in which scale has been considered ontologically in three ways – idealist, materialist and discursive.

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<sup>215</sup> Brenner, ‘The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration’.

<sup>216</sup> Noel Castree, Rob Kitchen and Alisdair Rogers, *The Oxford Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 164.

<sup>217</sup> Castree, Kitchen and Rogers, p. 164.

According to Herod, until the 1980s the main theoretical division in understanding scale was between Kantian idealism, and materialism.<sup>218</sup> Kant, he argues, has had a major impact on spatial theory, in believing that we can classify our descriptions of the world into discreet categories – precisely what we do when we discuss scale. Kant would have argued that categories do not exist in the material world, but rather *a priori*, or before we come to it. This is the question of whether we can prove that a circle is round. Does it exist outside of human perception, or must we be the ones to bring it into existence through our powers of reasoning? The answer is that it doesn't matter – the 'idea' of the perfect circle in our collective consciousness is what matters, as an *a priori* circle. Kant argued that time and space are subjective constructs through which we know the world, and any order of appearing the world is the result not of material processes but of the categorisations imposed on the world through our perception.<sup>219</sup> Hart, for example, argues that scales are not material things that we can measure and then categorise, but rather exist as mental conveniences for circumscribing and ordering processes and practices; that "there are no universal rules for recognising, delimiting and describing scale", suggesting a material understanding of scale is perhaps reductive.<sup>220</sup>

On the other hand materialists have argued that scales do exist as quantifiable, measurable realities and that they do not exist beyond their material reality in the world. Drawing on World Systems theory, Taylor<sup>221</sup> argues that the global scale is the "scale of reality"; the national scale is the "scale of ideology" and the urban scale is the "scale of experience". Smith<sup>222</sup> more powerfully argues that there are fundamental geographical tensions at play within the very structure of capitalism itself – capitalists must constantly negotiate the tension between the need to be in a fixed place so that accumulation can occur, and the need to be flexible in order to find more profit – which leads to the production of various – measurable – geographic scales. These measurable, apparent scales are urban, national and global (in later writing Smith added "Neighbourhood" and "Region"). The urban scale is empirically measurable through Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs) – those areas where a certain threshold of the population commutes to the same city or town for work – demonstrating that not only can we distinguish 'the urban' as not just a physical area of buildings, but that they exist at an economically functional and materially significant scale.

It may appear to some that materialists are actually using the *a priori* categories given by the idealists by default, or without realising it; the materialists are not all agreed on what can be measured and what is significant, so rest on pre-given categories for purposes of argumentation. But this is an issue of method rather than ontology.<sup>223</sup> Smith argues that scales do not just exist, waiting to be utilised but must instead be actively brought into being through the processes of capitalism. Differing slightly,

<sup>218</sup> Andrew Herod, *Scale* (Abington: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>219</sup> Arild Holt-Jensen, *Geography: History and Concepts* (London: SAGE Publications, 2009).

<sup>220</sup> Herod.

<sup>221</sup> P.J. Taylor, 'Geographical Scales within the World-Economy Approach', *Review*, 5 (1981), 3–11.

<sup>222</sup> Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

<sup>223</sup> Herod.

Taylor argues that scales exist “naturally” in the world, and we should concern ourselves with their role in capitalist processes.<sup>224</sup> Therefore it is the *politics of their construction*, not their innate qualities, which the materialists wish to highlight.<sup>225</sup> Again, in terms of the local, an idealistic understanding of scale, may privilege subjective interpretation or ways of seeing, but may also be a good defence of traditional ways of life, as it would describe the local as just ‘being’, needing no scientific analysis or interpretation. To ‘feel’ local therefore is to ‘be’ local: an idea that is at the same time liberating and potentially oppressive.<sup>226</sup>

The materialist conception of scale faced critique for lack of social analysis and acknowledgement of power relations. Delaney and Leitner, for example,<sup>227</sup> counter Smith by looking at the construction of scale from bottom-up and “non-capital-centric” perspectives.<sup>228</sup> The main criticisms directed at materialists like Smith contend that they ignore a dialectical relationship between people and places, and ignore gender inequality and social agency. Despite this, materialists and their critics and the idealists do have some things in common: they all view scale as aerial in nature, with boundaries and extent. Scales conceived as vertical or horizontal in nature, with degrees of fluidity, and relations existing between them that constitute the components of scalar metaphors.<sup>229</sup>

### 3.2.2 The components of scalar metaphors

To understand how physical space could be described as ‘scalar’, we must question the shape and structure what exactly we mean by scale. These are its boundaries, extension, its horizontality or verticality. For instance, Swyngedouw has been credited with coining the term ‘glocalisation’,<sup>230</sup> which challenges the idea that scales are nested, hierarchical and bounded. The glocal implies that global and local processes co-evolve or are co-constitutive. One cannot exist without the other. In fact, it is hard to say that anything is uniquely ‘global’ or ‘local’, but that, “local actions shape global flows, whilst global processes affect local actions”.<sup>231</sup> Swyngedouw also argues that we should not be primarily concerned with the ‘form’ of scales, but the processes through which scales become ‘reconstituted’; scale should not be the starting point for analysis, but we should look at process, and therefore *the politics of scale*: “the area of struggle where conflict is mediated and regulated and

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<sup>224</sup> Taylor.

<sup>225</sup> Herod.

<sup>226</sup> Iris Marion Young and Danielle S. Allen, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>227</sup> Delaney and Leitner.

<sup>228</sup> Herod.

<sup>229</sup> Herod.

<sup>230</sup> Erik Swyngedouw, ‘Neither Global Nor Local: “Glocalization” and the Politics of Scale’, in *Spaces of Globalization: Reasserting the Power of the Local* (New York/London: Guilford/Longman, 1997), pp. 137–66.

<sup>231</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Neither Global Nor Local: “Glocalization” and the Politics of Scale’.



compromises settled”.<sup>232</sup> Smith later illustrated how anti-gentrification activists worked across scales in New York to create a city-wide movement, therefore engaging in what he calls “scale jumping”,<sup>233</sup> showing that a materialist critique also considers complexity. Indeed, many today who draw on Smith and Harvey rally against global movements in (local) urban squares, but use the (global) internet to enable extra-local resistance and a sense of Internationalism, such as the Occupy movements from 2012.<sup>234</sup>

Recent years have seen a much stronger engagement with the philosophies which employ scale-jumping such as ‘think global, act local’; HSBC’s advertising campaign for many years was “The World’s Local Bank”. This has spilled over into governance, argue Deas and Ward,<sup>235</sup> who cite the increase in the perceived irrelevance of the state and rise in globalisation as factors leading to a seriously confused set of institutions operating at varying scales and overlapping spaces. A rise of sub-national authorities and groups was coincident with a rise in global institutions and supra-national networks of governance organisations in the 1990s:

The combination of local government reorganisation and the dispersal of power across a range of new structures during the 1980s and 1990s... had led to the proliferation of small-area and single-purpose bodies with sometimes overlapping and competing remits which detracted from any coherent perspective with regard to regional economic priorities<sup>236</sup>

Thus, amongst this general shake-up and splintering of the planning governance landscape, a return to the competitiveness of cities was prioritised.<sup>237</sup> This reflects an inversion of the direction of policy-making. No longer would a national state set plans and targets for cities and regions, but cities and regions themselves became the drivers of growth. Aggregated together they would constitute overall national growth.<sup>238</sup>

Throughout her work on locality studies during the 1980s and as part of the ESRC project ‘Changing Urban Regional Systems’ programme (CURS), Doreen Massey advocated an analysis at the local scale of the changing economic fortunes of UK cities. Massey tried to show that research could legitimately be grounded in a locality and at the same time say something about both the general/abstract dimensions of economic geographies.<sup>239</sup> Thus her formulation, a ‘global sense of

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<sup>232</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Neither Global Nor Local: “Glocalization” and the Politics of Scale’.

<sup>233</sup> Herod.

<sup>234</sup> Harvey, *Rebel Cities*.

<sup>235</sup> Iain Deas and Kevin G. Ward, ‘From the “New Localism” to the “New Regionalism”? The Implications of Regional Development Agencies for City – Regional Relations’, *Political Geography*, 19 (2000), 273–292.

<sup>236</sup> Deas and Ward. p. 278

<sup>237</sup> Harvey, ‘From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism’.

<sup>238</sup> Deas and Ward.

<sup>239</sup> Sallie A. Marston, John Paul Jones II and Keith Woodward, ‘Human Geography without Scale’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30.4 (2005), 416–32.

place’,<sup>240</sup> was a way of viewing the locale as containing global processes and showing their effects on very local scales. In doing this, Massey’s work brought concepts such as mobility, openness and flows to the forefront of thinking about place, and tried to overcome more dualistic debates over the dialectics of the ‘general’ and ‘particular’. In this light, then, we might view scale as comprising not just a hierarchy of top-down relations but, as Massey suggests, as enmeshed with a ‘power-geometry’.<sup>241</sup>

On this reading, local communities can establish tools, mechanisms and frameworks that enable them to mediate between their neighbourhood and at the same time engage with general issues outside their locale. Cox<sup>242</sup> refers to these as ‘spaces of dependence’ and ‘spaces of engagement’. The former are connections in our community that we depend upon to realise essential interests which we cannot find elsewhere. The latter, he argues, are those extra-local inter-dependencies which recognise the synergy between local and global processes. The local and global are not fixed and static ‘arenas’ but are in the constant process of being remade through the politics of their construction. Thus the local is always a process of negotiation and is not simply a passive position at the bottom of a hierarchy.<sup>243</sup> Howitt for example rejects the idea that scale is a nested hierarchy in which the sum of all the small scales “produces the large scale total”.<sup>244</sup> He argues that relations between scales should be considered in a dialectical fashion in multi-dimensional and simultaneous processes.<sup>245</sup> Thus the local is not distinct from other scales but contains elements of other geographic scales so that we achieve a more complex understanding of place as the “inter-penetration of the global and local”; as constellations of social relations and multi-scalar processes. Indeed, Massey writes

Local places are not simply always the victim of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts against the global. For places are also the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, co-ordinated, produced. They are ‘agents’ in globalisation.<sup>246</sup>

Given that scale seems to operate beyond a simple structure whereby each level or field is independent of the processes of the others in the ‘ladder’, Derrida’s concept of scale as a “between” term is useful here.<sup>247</sup> This is simply that scale, rather being an ontological thing, operates as an active verb which sits between space and society.

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<sup>240</sup> Doreen Massey, ‘A Global Sense of Place’, *Marxism Today*, 1991, 24–29.

<sup>241</sup> Doreen Massey, ‘Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place’, in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, ed. by J. Bird and others (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>242</sup> Kevin Cox, ‘Spaces of Dependence, Spaces of Engagement and the Politics of Scale, or: Looking for Local Politics’, *Political Geography*, 17.1 (1998).

<sup>243</sup> Cox.

<sup>244</sup> R. Howitt, ‘Scale as Relation; Musical Metaphors of Geographic Scale.’, *Area*, 30.1 (1998), 49–58.

<sup>245</sup> Howitt.

<sup>246</sup> Massey in Marston, Jones II and Woodward. p.419

<sup>247</sup> Herod.

### 3.2.3 Scale as discursive and performed

In recent years, post-structural and post-modern analyses have tried to move beyond the idealist-materialist debates. In addition they have sought to also look more closely at the co-construction of scalar ontologies and epistemologies. In this third approach, I look at how scale has been thought of as discursively produced and performed. Marston *et al.* ask whether, in suggesting that places are interconnected and that the general and the particular can no longer be so strongly distinguished, we are not simply abstracting space, detaching ourselves from the uneasy politics on the ground. How can we have scalar politics or a politics of scalar construction, as discussed above, they ask, if scale is simply awash with complexity, open-ness and fluidity? Thus, they propose abandoning the concept of scale altogether:<sup>248</sup>

it is the stabilizing and delimiting effects of hierarchical thinking – naming something ‘national’, for example – that calls for another version of the ‘politics of scale’: the need to expose and denaturalize scale’s discursive power<sup>249</sup>

Marston *et al.* claim that Massey relies too heavily on oppositional binaries of scale in her conceptualisation of the local. They argue that such thought is so pervasive that many binary oppositions have latched onto or conflated themselves with a local-global dualism. It can be seen in conjunction with structure and agency: agency is viewed as a local process, whereas structure is viewed in the abstract; the ideological; the philosophical. This is also true, they argue, in research where abstract/concrete is also conflated with global/local. They provide the example of the prevailing academic discourse since the 1980s of “macro-ism”, or, favouring global processes in analysis of place, and unquestioning the narratives of globalisation. This mirrors JK Gibson-Graham’s critique of the ‘essentialising’ tendencies and ‘strong theorising’ evident in so much critical (materialist) geography, such as Smith, which ironically reinforces the dominance of (global) capitalism by continually reproducing its logic in ‘reading for dominance’, rather than for difference, and narrating processes in ‘capitalocentric’ terms.<sup>250</sup> Likewise, localities researchers too often look ‘up’ and not ‘sideways’, and when they are trying to show how “the global is in the local” they too often make broad generalisations about the totalising effects of so-called globalisation. Marston *et al.* argue that some thinkers place too much emphasis on ‘globe talk’. Despite clichéd phrases such as “unique manifestations” and the “everyday sphere of the local”, they argue that in fact very little agency is actually given to basic everyday situations, remaining closed off in a scalar metaphor of smallness.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Marston, Jones II and Woodward.

<sup>249</sup> Marston, Jones II and Woodward. p.427

<sup>250</sup> J.K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

<sup>251</sup> Marston, Jones II and Woodward.

The hierarchical ladder of scale “has become the vertical equivalent of the spatial scientist’s grid epistemology”<sup>252</sup> and those levels of scale are becoming *a priori*. Thus researchers are pinning their empirical works on a set number of scales – body, home, neighbourhood, city, region, nation, and world – to the detriment of their studies. It is as if they are being used as “content fillers”, so that everyday observations and observed facts are being squeezed into neatly layered categories in order to conform to this hierarchy; the form determining the content. Indeed this goes back to initial understanding of scale from a Kantian perspective.

Obviously and in the abstract, we sympathize with Smith’s reading insofar as it encourages the dis-solution of scalar thinking. We take issue, however, with his reductive visualization of the world as simply awash in fluidities, ignoring the large variety of blockages, coagulations and assemblages (everything from material objects to doings and sayings) that congeal in space and social life. It remains difficult to discern what, if anything, takes the place of these negated objects other than the meta-spatial categories that flow thinking was meant to dissolve.<sup>253</sup>

Marston *et al.* claim that despite many writers relying on Deleuze and Guattari for their fetishisation of “open-ness” and “flexibility”, however they nonetheless misread their philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari state that their philosophy is not at all about abandoning structure, but allowing for spaces of diversity in which the fluid and the fixed constantly interact and reshape each other. In discussing their *striated* and *smooth* concepts, both realms are constantly reacting to each other. The metaphors of “the State” and “the Nomad”, illustrate this:<sup>254</sup> the state is constantly attempting to create order, constantly re-organising itself in order to make sense of, or perhaps even control, the nomad. The nomad is constantly reacting to its striation, and reconstituting itself as something, which leads the state to reconstruct its striations. Thus the object between the smooth and striated is constantly shifting, undefinable, never-present and always becoming.<sup>255</sup> These two oppositions never fully realise themselves in an absolute state, so to speak. Marston *et al.* therefore attempt to apply this notion to the concept of hierarchy and scale and discard both vertical and horizontal ontologies, to be replaced by a flat one.<sup>256</sup> Thus they abandon scalar thinking altogether, emphasising the material assemblages on the ground, for a site-based epistemology.

This view has been criticised from various positions. Some have suggested that it merely mirrors Actor Network Theory,<sup>257</sup> that Marston has misinterpreted the distinction between epistemology and

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<sup>252</sup> Marston, Jones II and Woodward. p. 422.

<sup>253</sup> Marston, Jones II and Woodward. p. 423.

<sup>254</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2004).

<sup>255</sup> Deleuze and Guattari.

<sup>256</sup> Marston, Jones II and Woodward.

<sup>257</sup> Kaiser and Nikiforova.

ontology<sup>258</sup>, or that it is repackaged Kantianism.<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, and one of the critiques that is often brought to bear on Foucault, is that one can never escape discourse even if one wishes to critique it. One is always active in discursive practice. In writing that the local is the “only place where social things happen”, Marston *et al.* leave themselves open to the critique that they are not at all abandoning scale, but reifying the local, and in doing so privileging a site-based epistemology. Kaiser and Nikiforova argue that “writing Scale out... will help to hide the social constructedness of scales and the way they are used to naturalise a set of socio-spatial relationships through everyday practices”.<sup>260</sup>

Thus Kaiser and Nikiforova argue that Marston’s conceptualisations are rather conservative, for overlooking the material politics of scale which they see as politically performed by agents. Scale to Kaiser and Nikiforova is very real in the way in which it makes truth-claims about spatial hierarchies and relationships of power. This is not to say that scale is simply about language. The very practice of urban planning in whatever jurisdiction will have for any specific plan, used to shape and manage the land, an implicit conception of scale. Thus Marston *et al.* seem to have brought the debate on scale full circle. Their approach inherently depoliticises places, arguing that their relations to other places and other scales is conforming to their oppression. Yet this leaves little room for an appreciation of the very real world of institutions, structures, actors, and the physical that exist all around us. In order to engage in politics we must acknowledge that whether it exists ontologically or not, scale is being used as a tool of power.

### 3.2.4 Scale in the Localism Act 2011

*For too long, central government has hoarded and concentrated power. Trying to improve people’s lives by imposing decisions, setting targets and demanding inspections from Whitehall simply doesn’t work. It creates bureaucracy. It leaves no room for adaptation to reflect local circumstances or innovation to deliver services more effectively and at lower cost. And it leaves people feeling ‘done to’ and imposed upon –*

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<sup>258</sup> Roderick Neumann, *The Political Ecology of Scale* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015).

<sup>259</sup> Robert J. Kaiser and Elena Nikiforova, ‘The Performativity of Scale: The Social Construction of Scale Effects in Narva, Estonia’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26 (2008), 537–562.

<sup>260</sup> Kaiser and Nikiforova. p. 537-538.

*the very opposite of the sense of participation and involvement on which a healthy democracy thrives.*<sup>261</sup>

This quote from the foreword of the *Plain English Guide to The Localism Act* sums up the basic philosophy at the heart of the Act. It presents localities, comprising people in a democracy, as passive victims that have been “done to” by regional and national governments. The idea that there exists a local arena, presented here as static, that is directly affected by national government shows that the Act is using a binary of local-national or victim-perpetrator to justify its existence.

Despite using this form of rhetoric on paper, what the Act does *not* say is that it is also using ‘the local’ to deploy a policy which is ignorant of the very real socio-economic material differences between local authorities and neighbourhoods around the country, as we saw in the various critiques in Chapter One. In this sense, in pretending that local authorities are equally capable of empowerment by not mentioning the fact that socio-spatial inequality is real, Government policy-makers are simultaneously using the local scale discursively to mask a nationally driven policy of planning deregulation.<sup>262</sup> They are using a discursive idea of the “local” to mask both the material inequalities the Act will bring, and the material consequences of national government policy the Act will help achieve. As such the Act is deliberately blind to space and vertical scale, ignoring differences *between* localities, but confident and explicit in deploying hierarchical scalar metaphors to evoke local empowerment from a defective national and regional state. In being able to use scale in such a way, we can say the Localism Act is a form of *scal-ing*, or, the imposition of an idea or set of ideas around scale in order to effect political action.

If we follow Bulkeley and others in recognising the need for a multi-scalar approach to sustainability,<sup>263</sup> this would mean rejecting policy approaches which either pit the local against the national or use scale as a discursive tactic to achieve wider political interests as per the Localism Act. As shown too by Birkenholtz<sup>264</sup> and Cohen and McCarthy,<sup>265</sup> scale would need to be mobilised at all possible tiers of governance, and policy would need to recognise the ways in which human-environmental relations cannot be represented by a simple binary of local-global but that of a “networked political ecology”<sup>266</sup> and also acknowledge that both vertical and horizontal scalar and spatial connections would need to be mobilised. Governance mechanisms for sustainability would need to be conceived through socio-natural assemblages, which are more nuanced than the

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<sup>261</sup> DCLG, p. i.

<sup>262</sup> Allmendinger and Haughton, ‘The Evolution and Trajectories of English Spatial Governance: “Neoliberal” Episodes in Planning’; Olesen.

<sup>263</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, ‘Rethinking Sustainable Cities: Multilevel Governance and the “Urban” Politics of Climate Change’.

<sup>264</sup> Trevor Birkenholtz, ‘Progress in Human Geography Network Political Ecology: Adaptation Research’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 36.3 (2012), 295–315

<sup>265</sup> Cohen and McCarthy.

<sup>266</sup> Birkenholtz.

hierarchical conception of scale assumed by the Localism Act. However, the most appropriate scale for the most appropriate socio-natural process is also subject to contestation and constant re-working as I will now show in the next section.

### 3.3 Natural constructions

As alluded to in Chapter One, underlying notions of sustainable development and sustainable urban planning give rise to different spatial and design policies. These stem from the differences in the way basic ideas about nature and humanity are considered ontologically, the relations between them, and the practical ways to achieve desired outcomes through the production of different models. In this section I will explore the way in which the idea of ‘the natural’ has influenced urban planning and how this is realised through sustainable urban planning. This helps us to think about the differing typologies of scalar-natural planning along the Greenway today and in the future.

#### 3.3.1 The legacy of the Enlightenment

Beyond the “best practice” design guidelines for sustainable urban development we saw in Chapter One greenspace planning in cities has become a major focus for sustainable urban agendas. In some cases, redesigning urban natures for sustainability has little to do with carbon reduction or conservation and is more about an aesthetic requirement.<sup>267</sup> In other cases, threaded through more functional considerations such as density, material use and connectivity are questions of making cities ‘green’ through wider social and economic functions of urban life.<sup>268</sup> Today, there are many attempts to bring nature back into the city through functional planning of streets, housing, public spaces and pedestrian and cycle routes.<sup>269</sup> However, approaches towards urban greening have been driven by broader sustainability policies which in turn are affected by how sustainability is understood by policy-makers. In this section I will show how the various ways of planning for sustainability, particularly from the stance of urban greenspace, can reveal a variety of different and contested ideological and political assumptions and help us to interpret nature on the Greenway in a typological manner.

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<sup>267</sup> Hamil Pearsall and Joseph Pierce, ‘Urban Sustainability and Environmental Justice: Evaluating the linkages in public planning/policy discourse’, *Local Environment*, 15.6 (2010), 569–80

<sup>268</sup> Rogers.

<sup>269</sup> Hebbert; Catharine Ward Thompson, ‘Urban Open Space in the 21st Century’, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 60 (2002), 59–72.

## Scale and the natural in urban planning

The natural environment and the city have long been two oppositional categories thought to be in need of continued separation, reconciliation or co-evolution. At the heart of this thinking lies a Cartesian dualism of ‘the urban’ vs. ‘the natural’. In the first instance – separation – the urban and the natural are seen as opposites: nature is pristine and virginal and there is nothing strictly natural in the city. The city should be kept from further encroachment into the countryside. The second instance – reconciliation – is the idea that nature and the urban are still ontologically separate categories but when worked together in harmony can produce holistically balanced places and complement one another. In the third and final instance – co-evolution – nature and the city are no longer seen as binary opposites, but as one and the same thing. Following Henri Lefebvre, some talk about ‘planetary urbanisation’<sup>270</sup> – the explosion of the urban out into its natural hinterland and the collapsing of conceptual and spatial boundaries between country/city, rural/urban etc. – although this field tends to privilege the urban over all else rather than see urban and nature as collapsible into each other. In the co-evolution position, the countryside is seen as not at all natural, and the city is abundant with natures. Metaphors to help talk about the latter include terms like ‘socio-natural’ and ‘assemblage’.<sup>271</sup> Such concepts recognise that all materiality in the world comes from a natural origin, whether a banana or a mobile phone. Writing in the field in of urban political ecology, Loftus writes

The intention of such writing has been to disrupt the idea of the city as the antithesis of nature and focus on the processes through which the city is constituted as a socio-natural assemblage or, in Harvey’s words, as a created ecosystem. Such processes are profoundly shaped by power.<sup>272</sup>

There is some evidence from policy documents that planning practice is moving in this direction, by viewing greenspace as a cross-cutting theme for other policy areas such as economic growth and housing. We see this to some extent in *All London Green Grid* – London’s greenspace planning document which looks at greenspace in functional and aesthetic terms, as being places for relaxation, connective spaces and places to help reduce poor health.<sup>273</sup> Nevertheless, greenspace planning is still problematic in many examples of urban regeneration, particularly in the way it is used as a proxy for sustainability. Greenspace, therefore, is still a focal point for modern anxieties about wider issues such as sustainability, health and economic growth in the city.

The binary between the urban and the natural stems from developments during the Enlightenment that sought to classify the world into distinct categories.<sup>274</sup> The deployment of the concept of *wilderness* or

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<sup>270</sup> Neil Brenner, *Implosions/explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Jovis, 2014).

<sup>271</sup> Loftus.

<sup>272</sup> Loftus, p. 3.

<sup>273</sup> Mayor of London, *Green Infrastructure and Open Environments: The All London Green Grid - Supplementary Planning Guidance* (London, 2012).

<sup>274</sup> Loftus; Neil Smith, *Uneven Development*.



*virgin land* – what was described by Cicero as ‘first nature’<sup>275</sup> – was inherently linked, as we saw above, to power.<sup>276</sup> The idea that a pristine nature can be in contact with human civilisation and maintain this status of purity was strongly repudiated by Smith.<sup>277</sup> Too often this idea about nature was used to justify the extraction of natural resources and the need for European civilisation in the form of agricultural improvement, or, *second nature*. Yet, at home, first nature was a hugely attractive motif, particularly in the arts, where writers and painters took inspiration from nature and developed theories around the sublime, the beautiful and the awesome to explain and categorise human experience with nature.<sup>278</sup> This became more prominent during rapid urbanisation and industrialisation in England where cities were not only viewed as unnatural in environmental terms, for their pollution and encroachment, but also in social terms in that they were innately evil for the human spirit<sup>279</sup> and, in the wake of the revolutionary events of 1848 across Europe, dangerous hotbeds of potential unrest.<sup>280</sup> Again, this was linked to power, as many of these thinkers, who used first nature as a platform for social reform agendas, were viewed with suspicion and many Romantics sympathised with the principles of the French Revolution.<sup>281</sup> Nevertheless, for all its good and bad implications, the idea of first nature existing in relation to humans is naïve or deliberately misleading. Indeed, Loftus notes that the ‘natural’ beauty of the countryside is heavily constructed through social relations:

The innocent romance of the Lake District ... has been shaped by centuries of socio-natural struggle producing complex field systems and grazing patterns that are so fundamental to the natural landscape.<sup>282</sup>

Ruskin’s *Modern Painters*<sup>283</sup> provides a clear example of the great sense of the English landscape as a cultural construction but also how it was seen an intrinsic phenomena with religious or divine prominence.<sup>284</sup> In general terms, whilst the Romantic era was dominated by concern for the loss of (first) nature, it was a longing and a striving rather than a full immersion.<sup>285</sup> It still produced the idea that nature was *external* to the human species. The painters, musicians and writers of the age had a lust for the natural, which meant that it became an object of desire to be viewed upon and

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<sup>275</sup> John Dixon Hunt, ‘The Structures of Landscape’, in *Greater Perfections*, pp. 73–93.

<sup>276</sup> Neil Smith, ‘The Production of Nature’.

<sup>277</sup> Neil Smith, ‘The Production of Nature’.

<sup>278</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

<sup>279</sup> Schama.

<sup>280</sup> Hawbsbawm.

<sup>281</sup> Loftus.

<sup>282</sup> Loftus, p. xv.

<sup>283</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, ed. by David Barrie, New edition (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1989).

<sup>284</sup> Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, ‘Introduction: Iconography and Landscape’, in *The Iconography of Landscape*, ed. by Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>285</sup> Hunt, *Greater Perfections*.

consumed.<sup>286</sup> This is why we find in the English garden, a rejection of the rationalism of the neo-classical and baroque French gardens for a purposely constructed landscape of the natural.<sup>287</sup> The domineering lines and geometric fetishism of Absolutist French kings and Enlightenment architects gave way to the bucolic ‘English garden’ landscape which, in turning away from formal classical continental styles, was designed to encourage the primacy of human experience over human reason and presented an idealistic view of nature.<sup>288</sup>

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century ideas around the benefits of the urban and the natural working together began to emerge. Rather than the urban being seen as evil or malign, and nature pure and innocent, thinking shifted so that they were seen as two complementary opposites that produced one balanced whole. This had radical implications for urban and regional planning; espoused most strongly by Patrick Geddes and Ebenezer Howard. In developing his famous *garden cities* vision which sought to balance the benefits of country and city into one ‘garden city’, Howard writes

Human society and the beauty of nature were meant to be enjoyed together... As man and woman by their varied gifts and faculties supplement each other, so should town and country. The town is the symbol of society... of science, art, culture, religion... The country is the symbol of God’s love for and care for man... We are fed by it, clothed by it, and by it we are warmed and sheltered. On its bosom we rest... Town and country must be married<sup>289</sup>

This extract also reveals the way in which the nature/urban dualism reflected the strong gender binaries common at the time, with nature being passively female who should “care for man” on whose “bosom we rest”. Aside from this, Geddes – who started out as a biologist but became a major influence on the regional planning movement<sup>290</sup> – believed in Holism, the idea that all parts of any system should be thought of as linked in a single whole.<sup>291</sup> For Geddes this meant an entire region, including nature and the city, whose processes would come together as an optimally balanced regional system.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Eamonn Slater, ‘Reconstructing “Nature” As a Picturesque Theme Park’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 5.3 (2007), 231–45

<sup>287</sup> Hunt, ‘The Structures of Landscape’.

<sup>288</sup> Hunt, *Greater Perfections*.

<sup>289</sup> Howard, p. 48.

<sup>290</sup> Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution: An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement and to the Study of Civics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1915).

<sup>291</sup> Carter, chap. 4.

<sup>292</sup> Geddes; Naveeda Khan, ‘Geddes in India: Town Planning, Plant Sentience, and Cooperative Evolution’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29 (2011), 840–57; Volker Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002).

After WWI, car-led suburbanisation in England began, particularly in the south and the midlands.<sup>293</sup> This was aided by a growing middle-class, rising incomes and lack of regulatory spatial planning.<sup>294</sup> Low density sprawl along major roads, known as ribbon development, became derided for various reasons and reflected an entrenched class system. Upper classes felt increased development pressures on their estates<sup>295</sup> and cultural critics found the mock-Tudor developments garish and ugly and symptomatic of new money.<sup>296</sup> It was in this period that John Betjeman wrote his now famous poem *Slough*, decrying the blandness of newly-built towns and the lower middle-classes who lived in them. This critique came from the Romantic myth of nature being opposed to the urban. As the critic Thomas Sharp wrote in 1932:

Rural influences neutralize the town. Urban influences neutralize the country. In a few years all will be neutrality. The strong, masculine virility of the town; the softer beauty, the richness, the fruitfulness of that mother of men, the countryside, will be debased into one sterile, hermaphrodite beastliness.<sup>297</sup>

It was countered by those who recognised the myth of first nature and welcomed what they saw as the “democratization of the countryside”.<sup>298</sup>

Nonetheless, cities were sprawling in ways seen in today’s terms as highly unsustainable and in 1947 the Town and Country Planning Act sought to re-direct the nature of urban development towards containment.<sup>299</sup> This was done through establishing green belts around major cities and compelling councils to create comprehensive redevelopment plans for their inner cities (London and the Southeast had their own greenbelt legislation in place by 1938).<sup>300</sup> Although a reaction to inter-war sprawl, the Acts also reflected the mood of the 1940s and ‘50s – a general optimism about grand planning – and saw neighbourhood units, cities, new towns and regions as part of the same holistic system that could be planned and shaped in an optimum way.<sup>301</sup> Underpinning this were strong assumptions about nature and the role of green space.<sup>302</sup>

<sup>293</sup> Peter Hall, ‘The City of by-Pass Variegated’, in *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988). pp. 47-85.

<sup>294</sup> Hall, ‘The City of by-Pass Variegated’.

<sup>295</sup> Alexandra Harris, ‘Village Life’, in *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010).

<sup>296</sup> Hall, ‘The City of by-Pass Variegated’.

<sup>297</sup> T Sharp, *Town and Countryside: Some Aspects of Urban and Rural Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932). In Hall, ‘City of by-Pass Variegated’.

<sup>298</sup> Hall, ‘The City of by-Pass Variegated’.

<sup>299</sup> Hall and Tewdwr-Jones.

<sup>300</sup> Cullingworth and Nadin.

<sup>301</sup> See for example: Patrick Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan* (London: University of London Press, 1944); Robert Bruce, *First Planning Report to the Highways and Planning Committee of the Corporation of the City of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1945); Central Office of Information, *Charlie in New Town* (British Film Institute, 1948).

<sup>302</sup> Fabiano Lemes de Oliveira, ‘Abercrombie’s Green-Wedge Vision for London: The County of London Plan 1943 and the Greater London Plan of 1944’, *Town Planning Review*, 86.5 (2015), 495–518.

## Scale and the natural in urban planning

Michael Hebbert has shown how, in the post-war era of planning, greenspace and architectural modernism went hand-in-hand.<sup>303</sup> This therefore embodies Howard's metaphor of motherhood or marriage, and our second urban-nature conceptualisation of 'reconciliation'. This is evident in the plans for neighbourhood units, which sought to evoke the traditional English village green within modernist development in comprehensive redevelopment schemes; the fashion for flanking new roads and motorways with green embankments, otherwise known as Parkways; and the general approach to landscape design: which together represent modern reinterpretations of the English pastoral.<sup>304</sup> Hebbert shows how landmark publications of modern landscape theory, such as Tunnard's *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (1938),<sup>305</sup> went on to define a new style of landscape design for the age of technological modernity over the following decades. Landscape design in cities in the immediate post-war years was part of the broader utopianism and belief in social progress through technological modernity. This meant that landscape design had to eschew any notions of private property and gave rise to the siting of buildings within green blocks, where the blocks no longer defined streets. This block typology was first articulated by Walter Gropius in *Das Neue Berlin* (1929).<sup>306</sup> This fed into the prevailing idea that greenspaces were open to all. The political aspects of this were explicit, as Hebbert suggests:

The idealised pre-industrial pastoral imagery of the picturesque movement fitted well with the technological optimism of the machine age. Nature free of toil was laid out for contemplation and physical enjoyment.<sup>307</sup>

This approach also applied to road transport: in an 'age of affluence' the spread of the motorcar was also seen as transformative for society. Urban highways would become 'elongated parks' and would bring both cars and nature into the city.<sup>308</sup> Near the end of this period, in *The Highway and the City* (1964), Lewis Mumford wrote:

Perhaps the first step towards regaining possession of our souls will be to re-possess and plan the whole landscape... In the cities of the future, ribbons of green must run through every quarter, forming a continuous web of garden and mall, widening at the edge of the city into protective green belts, so that landscape and garden will become an integral part of urban no less than rural life<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Hebbert.

<sup>304</sup> Hebbert.

<sup>305</sup> Christopher Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (London: Architectural Press, 1938).

<sup>306</sup> Wolfgang Sonne, 'Dwelling in the Metropolis: Reformed Urban Blocks 1890–1940 as a Model for the Sustainable Compact City', *Progress in Planning*, 72.2 (2009), 53–149

<sup>307</sup> Hebbert, p. 34.

<sup>308</sup> Hebbert.

<sup>309</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The Highway and the City* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1964), pp. 173–75. in Hebbert.

The era of grand planning, however, began to wane in the late 1960s and early 1970s as critics pointed to a variety of social failures and expense in the name of technological modernisation,<sup>310</sup> while their costs were finally catching up with governments. This was particularly true after the OPEC crisis of 1973. After this period, numerous processes would influence the development of today's urban political ecology field as described earlier by Loftus and our third urban-nature conceptualisation – co-evolution. Such processes included the vast expense and upkeep of modern greenspaces in tandem with more general urban decay through de-industrialisation – a twin process which blurred the lines between two different forms of urban nature. This also fed into narratives of fear around the safety of neglected green spaces. The landscape architect was relegated below the traffic engineer, whilst 'elongated parks' became merely routine design codes.<sup>311</sup>

Greenspaces under modernism were viewed more through their role in joining together separate zones of activity rather than being acknowledged as spaces in their own right. They were often on the wrong scale for human use, lacking in any supervision or natural surveillance and were indistinguishable from the emerging 'wild' spaces of emerging brownfield sites left after industrial decline.<sup>312</sup> This led to some landscape designers arguing that greenspace should be allowed to grow semi-wild in what was called the 'successional approach'.<sup>313</sup> This was associated with landscape architects including Ian McHarg<sup>314</sup> and Michael Hough.<sup>315</sup> However, evidence from residents showed that this approach was unpopular when deliberately planned in various settings, as public fear of crime still dominated these wilder aesthetics.<sup>316</sup>

In recent years, there has been resurgence in reversing the modernist view of greenspace as open and public via a 'matrix reversal' where open-out public spaces are relegated in favour of closed-in and to some extent privatised green spaces.<sup>317</sup> Greenspaces are now once again being defined through built form rather than the other way around. This has been aided by a resurgence of an idea of cities as solutions to environmental problems, a turn from anti-urbanism to pro-urbanism, as well as the emergence of gentrification and the revitalisation of city centres.<sup>318</sup> In addition there has been revived interest in industrial histories and legacies which have made the re-planning and landscaping of former infrastructures desirable. Famous examples include New York's *High Line*, Atlanta's *Belt Line* and Paris' *Promenade Plantée*.

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<sup>310</sup> James Scott.

<sup>311</sup> Hebbert.

<sup>312</sup> Hebbert; Jane Jacobs; Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York: Collier Books, 1978).

<sup>313</sup> Hebbert.

<sup>314</sup> Ian McHarg, *Design with Nature* (New York: Natural History Press, 1969).

<sup>315</sup> Michael Hough, *Cities and Natural Process* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>316</sup> Hebbert.

<sup>317</sup> Hebbert, p. 43.

<sup>318</sup> Hebbert.

In this contemporary paradigm of ‘landscape urbanism’,<sup>319</sup> we find ourselves overcoming earlier oppositional binaries between nature and the city and more commonly embracing the ways in which cities can be designed with responsive environments woven through the urban fabric in a manner which is not romantic or redundant but active and functional. Hence we are now closer towards planning for nature in cities by recognising the ways in which human settlements and the natural world are not ontologically separate categories handed down from the Enlightenment; rather than acknowledging that human settlements are part of the re-shaping of a natural environment within which they are fully enmeshed. As Loftus writes, we should think of this process as the “urbanization of nature”.<sup>320</sup> However, today’s ‘re-enclosure’ comes with a trade-off – that this matrix reversal produces greenspaces that are more likely to have been managed and regulated by private companies or else serve the interests of corporate and state-led gentrification.<sup>321</sup> As we find along the Jubilee Greenway in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP), it was only the section that came under London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) control – a public-private regeneration company – in which greenspace was landscaped in a formal manner to appeal to visitors and tourists in the run up to the games.<sup>322</sup>

### 3.3.2 The value of nature: intrinsic and instrumental

In the last section I described the relationship between ‘the urban’ and ‘the natural’ focusing on the relationship between greenspace planning and the urban environment. As Carmona has pointed out, greenspace planning is not inherently sustainable and there is a variation in the motivations of certain greenspace plans and the outcomes they produce.<sup>323</sup> However, even if the physical features of urban greening are only indirectly related to sustainability outcomes, they can still help form narratives and discourses about wider sustainable development agendas. For example, greening can be used as a symbolic reference to sustainability as part of a regeneration project. This is arguably evident in the QEOP and the way in which urban greening has been used to support the LLDC’s wider policy interpretation of sustainable urbanism, which, as the LLDC is Mayoral Development Corporation, is a city-regional government interpretation.<sup>324</sup> Therefore when considering urban greening, it is not sufficient to look at the micro-level performance indicators such as urban cooling or biodiversity impacts alone – we also need to look at how that design is situated within a broader ideological agenda. In London, in addition to the politics which shaped the greenspace planning in and around the

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<sup>319</sup> See: Andres Duany, *Landscape Urbanism and Its Discontents* (New Society Publishers, 2013).

<sup>320</sup> Loftus, p. 4.

<sup>321</sup> Matthew Carmona, ‘The Isle of Dogs : Four Development Waves, Five Planning Models, Twelve Plans, Thirty-Five Years, and a Renaissance . . . of Sorts’, *Progress in Planning*, 71 (2009), 87–151; Pearsall and Pierce.

<sup>322</sup> Interview with Planner at LBN

<sup>323</sup> Carmona, ‘Sustainable Urban Design: Principles to Practice’.

<sup>324</sup> Interview with Alex Lavine, Head of Planning Policy, LLDC.

Olympic Park, especially in the context of the Acelor-Mittal tower and the company's carbon emissions – plans for a new garden bridge across the Thames seems to underpin the fact that sustainability has become an even more elusive term in which nature in the city is privatised as an urban spectacle.<sup>325</sup> These examples remind us that all sustainability agendas are situated simultaneously across multiple scales: from local design impacts to national political-economic agendas. The myriad ways in which urban greenspaces are linked to divergent understandings of wider sustainability policy is a good place to unpack the underlying value systems around nature which inform these policies. This will help us in this chapter to see how planning policy at multiple scales is divergent in focus through the language used and justifications deployed.

Carter identifies three main value systems for nature. For the purposes of brevity I will focus on the two which are most relevant to this thesis: 'intrinsic value' and 'instrumental value'. The former posits that nature is something that should be valued before human needs as it is a holistic entity, capable of its own survival through an internally balanced system of reproduction. The instrumental value of nature posits that even if the intrinsic value is not apparent to justify the protection of nature we should nonetheless protect it because it benefits humans. On this reading, nature provides us with both pleasure and resources that we must therefore maintain.<sup>326</sup>

The intrinsic value of nature is closely related to Holism: nature is seen as an internally coherent and balanced system of parts which constitute a whole. When nature is valued intrinsically, humanity is considered outside of nature, against nature or not natural, and is accused of disturbing the natural order of the ecosystem. This is similar to the idea of first nature. In this value system, we have corrupted and made nature unbalanced. Carter defines holism as "the way the different parts of nature interact with each other in ecosystems and the biosphere... rather than atomistic accounts of nature that focus on individual parts in isolation".<sup>327</sup> There are positive and negative outcomes of valuing nature intrinsically as it relates to sustainable urbanism. First, it lends itself to the common naturalistic fallacy – the idea that because something is natural it must be good. Grundmann writes that, in this position, "the authority of nature and her laws" is claimed to justify the existing condition of society or "to be the foundation stone of a new society that will solve ecological problems".<sup>328</sup> This is commonly seen in debates around greenbelt policy, where the greenbelt becomes a signifier for the natural world, and any encroachment upon it must be a 'bad thing'. This belies the fact that it was developed in an era before global environmental change was understood, and when urban containment was seen as a positive solution to cities which were themselves seen as detrimental for the environment. In addition, with new forms of sustainable development available, such as the high

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<sup>325</sup> Giles Fraser, 'London's Garden Bridge Would Benefit Only the Rich', *The Guardian*, 2016

<<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/sep/22/london-garden-bridge-regeneration-bolton-loose-canon>>.

<sup>326</sup> Neil Carter, *The Politics of the Environment: Ideas, Activism, Policy*. 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

<sup>327</sup> Carter. p. 19.

<sup>328</sup> R Grundman, *Marxism and Ecology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 119.

density transport orientated developments advocated by Richard Rogers and the *Urban Renaissance* agenda,<sup>329</sup> there is no reason why building on green belts is any less sustainable than the status quo. The positive aspects of intrinsic nature are greater public awareness and appreciation of greenspaces and environmental issues. Visiting the proposed ‘Garden Bridge’ over the Thames may spark interest in conservation or botany to people who otherwise may not consider their worth.

An instrumental value of nature is closely related to sustainable development. This views the natural world as there for human survival – as an instrument of human needs. As such we must ensure that it is reproduced and that we exist with it in a mutually supportive relationship.<sup>330</sup> For our future survival, the continuation of natural abundance is required. Like the intrinsic value of nature there are also positive and negative outcomes of viewing nature in this way. The most obvious positive is that it avoids the naturalistic fallacy. It recognises the idea that just because something is branded as ‘green’ does not necessarily mean it is ‘good’. It takes a more scientific approach to nature: does not romanticise it as a deity or pretend it is inherently balanced. This means that it allows for a more practical field of policy options in developing responses to climate change, such as building on the green belt or allowing corporations rather than individuals and communities to reduce their carbon footprints owing to greater economies of scale in the supply of food. There are also negative aspects of this approach: Valuing nature instrumentally, inadvertently risks reducing complex phenomena to a simple metric that can be traded or ‘dealt with’ in a technocratic and post-political manner.<sup>331</sup> The idea of sustainable development risks just this; it produces models that give the impression that the politics of sustainability can be masked by discourses of social, economic and environmental balance. This vision of sustainability does not look at the trade-offs or, as I argue in this thesis, the politics of scale in sustainability policy. For Loftus, this instrumental approach, like the inherent value of nature, also leads to unhelpful narratives around climate change from the way in which nature is detached from everyday life. He writes:

One result of the recognition of environmental change has paradoxically been a resurgence of a dualistic understanding of the world. Because of this, nature is increasingly abstracted from everyday life... Recent narratives of global environmental change can be deeply disempowering. We should be asking what kind of world we want to live in, but rather are currently asking how to power this society in low carbon ways... Too many narratives of Global Environmental Change depoliticise the process and relationships out of which climate change is produced. The appearance of democratic debate merely masks a deep political impotence.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Rogers.

<sup>330</sup> Carter.

<sup>331</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>332</sup> Loftus, p. xvi.



Erik Swyngedouw is particularly critical of this kind of understanding of nature, describing ecology as an “opiate of the people”.<sup>333</sup> Firstly, there is an assumption in sustainable development discourse that social and ecological problems are external side-effects and not an integral part of liberal politics and capitalist economies.<sup>334</sup> These side-effects are constituted as a global, universal threat and therefore a total threat where the enemy is always vague and disembodied. The target of concern, therefore, is to be managed through a consensual dialogical politics whereby demands become depoliticised and politics naturalised within a given socio-ecological order for which there is no real alternative. Swyngedouw further argues that these types of politics regarding nature can be considered post-political.<sup>335</sup> The ‘post-political’, he argues, is a concept that touches on many parts of the human realm, including security, welfare and consumption. It is a situation whereby “ideological or dissensual contestation and struggles are replaced by techno-managerial planning, expert management and administration”; in which the technocratic and market-oriented “regulation of the security and welfare of human lives is the primary goal”.<sup>336</sup> This hegemonic depoliticising discourse, Swyngedouw argues, silences and makes invisible that which is often at stake in ecological and environmentalist arguments: “the ideas of different kinds of societies”.<sup>337</sup>

Although both intrinsic and instrumental value systems start from very different perspectives on how to value nature, both come with positive and negative aspects and are equally susceptible to romanticising or abstracting nature in different directions. Both of these value systems are closely related to eco-centrism and anthropocentrism. As I discussed in Chapter One, an eco-centric approach to nature privileges the entire planet and its ecosystem, including humans, at the heart of its outlook. This means that humans fall within a holistic and natural ‘whole’, interconnected to non-human natures. However, it also risks inadvertently romanticising nature. Gandy, for example, writes that “the ecocentrist position ultimately reiterates existing dichotomies between nature and culture through its search for external sources of ‘truth’”.<sup>338</sup> An anthropocentric position mirrors an instrumental value system and places humans at the centre of its outlook. This is not merely for the survival of the human species, but rather recognises that humans are the only species who can conserve other species and act to protect the natural environment.<sup>339</sup> However, this position also runs the risk of abstracting the problem of climate change, and reducing the complexity of nature to a metric such as in carbon

<sup>333</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>334</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>335</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>336</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>337</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>338</sup> Matthew Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 103.October (2013), 1301–16 (p. 1309)

<sup>339</sup> Carter, chap. 4.

trading or as Raco has shown in the development of technocratic modes of ‘sustainable’ regeneration.<sup>340</sup>

### 3.3.3 Natures on the Greenway

Discussions around the types of sustainable urbanism being advocated have intersected heavily with design outcomes in physical space. Raco notes how sustainable regeneration programmes, such as the London 2012 Olympic legacy, have promoted standardised technocratic models in which policies can be quantified in abstract terms and then ‘rolled out’ to other places in a decontextualised manner.<sup>341</sup> The focus on sustainability, he argues, is now more about “delivery” rather than the “kind of society we want to live in”.<sup>342</sup> Within the realm of policy, both social *and* environmental sustainability have been critiqued for merely supporting the status quo of continued economic growth, or economic sustainability. Colomb, for example, critiques the social sustainability claims of the Labour Government’s urban regeneration policy, noting how it has promoted a form of state-led gentrification and the ‘civilising’ of urban space.<sup>343</sup>

*Imagine strolling through a dockland area digesting Friday’s lunch one summer’s afternoon. You cross paved walkways punctuated with illuminated water features and hear the liquid patter of a fountain’s droplets overlaying the hum of a not-too-distant business district winding down for the week; you negotiate the clutter of plastic art planted sporadically in the concrete and circle a twelve-foot anchor drenched in treacle-like gloss paint; you approach an arcade and hear people conversing around brushed steel tables of coffee houses whose interiors invoke an impression of Latin-American Moderne. Drinking espresso, soy latte, or the finest bottled Belgian beer, these people are part of the new British metropolitan bohemia and while your cynicism compels its condescension you secretly fancy yourself as a member. (Hoskins & Tallon, 2004, p. 25)<sup>344</sup>*

This sensually induced urban idyll is very similar to the rhetoric in the sustainability vision produced by the LLDC in their *Your Sustainability Guide to the Olympic Park*.

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<sup>340</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’; Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’.

<sup>341</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’.

<sup>342</sup> Loftus, chap. xvi.

<sup>343</sup> Claire Colomb, ‘Unpacking New Labour’s “Urban Renaissance” Agenda: Towards a Socially Sustainable Reurbanization of British Cities?’, *Planning Practice and Research*, 22.1 (2007), 1–24

<sup>344</sup> Colomb, p. 6.

*It's the year 2030. Welcome to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Arrive by bike, dock at a secure parking station and begin your exploration on foot.*

*Stroll along the canal paths and watch children kayaking, water taxis returning locals from the city and fishermen sitting on the shaded banks.*

*Take in the view of London's iconic skyline from the panoramic heights of the ArcelorMittal Orbit's viewing platform. Admire the sweep of the Velodrome's curving timber roof across the park, and look down at crowds parking their bikes and hopping off buses as they arrive for a concert at the Stadium.*

*Explore the community gardens, walk along the wetlands, or wander among the new homes, capped with green roofs, solar panels, and clever ways to catch rainwater. Discover the buildings – as smart as they are stylish – built from sustainable materials, and designed to use energy and water sparingly.*

*Or just relax in the park with a picnic, listen in to an open-mike [sic] session and watch the vibrant community that lives there go by<sup>345</sup>*

We can read this as a form of eco-localism, employing a romantic vision of nature, where pleasure, consumption and sensual experiences are associated with sustainability over a relatively small urban neighbourhood. This 'social sustainability' is thus presented to us aesthetically through a particular environmental aesthetic. In addition to the experiences above that are open to visitors and residents, the image below is noticeable for the use of wild flower planting, which has become a popular form of landscaping in recent times. Although there are ecological reasons for this particularly to help the bee population,<sup>346</sup> there is an aesthetic impulse here which reminds us of the 'secessionist approach' noted earlier where wild planting is meant to look more informal and more natural than formal gardens. Again, such spaces require high maintenance. On a walk through the former Athlete's village for example, it was noticed how after only a few years of them being planted, the wild planting already looked overgrown and bogged down with litter.

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<sup>345</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Park 2030*, 2012. p.7.

<sup>346</sup> Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, *The National Pollinator Strategy: For Bees and Other Pollinators in England*, Defra Report, 2014.

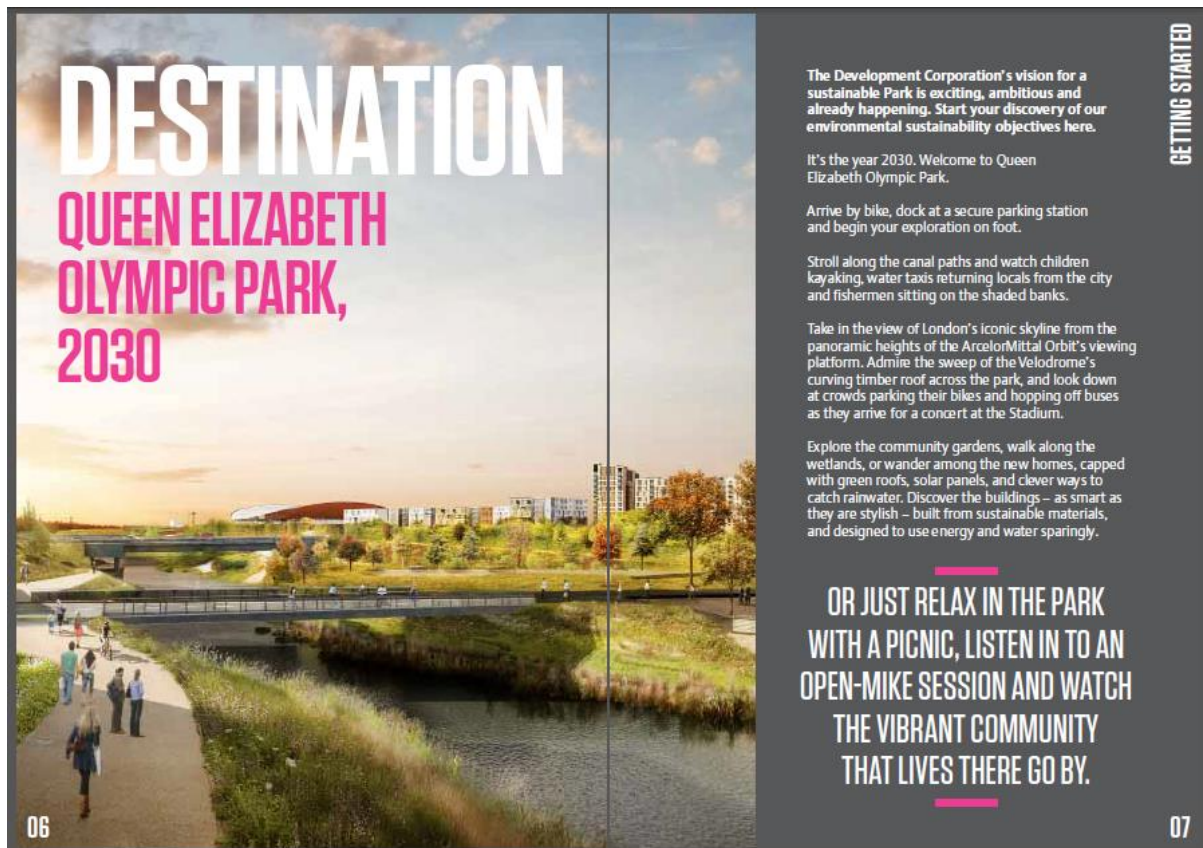


Figure 1. An urban idyll? Promoting the QEOP.<sup>347</sup>

In terms of environmental sustainability, the disjuncture between sustainability policy and sustainable urban design has been discussed by Carmona, who recognises the ways in which greenspace planning today too often becomes tokenistic for a wider economic agenda which focuses on the status quo.<sup>348</sup> Thus when we talk about ‘sustainable urban design’, we must always be vigilant to the ways in which this can become nothing but a symbolic gesture. Carmona notes the example of a wind-turbine on top of advertising stands in a large shopping centre car park.<sup>349</sup> Clearly the small gains made in renewable electricity generation do not outweigh the carbon emissions and pollutants from countless cars. He writes:

[Urban design] will focus on broader environmental concerns which tend to feature poorly in both private and public agendas, and responsibility for which is frequently highly fragmented. The result can too easily be a token engagement with sustainability, rather than a serious attempt to reflect a more holistic sustainable urban design agenda.<sup>350</sup>

<sup>347</sup> LLDC, *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Park 2030*, 2012, p.7.

<sup>348</sup> Carmona, ‘The Isle of Dogs : Four Development Waves, Five Planning Models, Twelve Plans, Thirty-Five Years, and a Renaissance . . . of Sorts’.

<sup>349</sup> Carmona, ‘Sustainable Urban Design: Principles to Practice’, p. 50.

<sup>350</sup> Carmona, ‘Sustainable Urban Design: Principles to Practice’, p. 50.

We can argue that this tokenism is present on the Greenway in the section landscaped by the LLDC. The section of the Greenway inside the LLDC has been repaved, has regular landscape maintenance, and contains recycling facilities, bins and public art. All of these are features that the Greenway within Newham jurisdiction does not have but which the local community would like as evidenced through public consultation in the Adams and Sutherland *Greenway Vision Study*.<sup>351</sup> The tokenism of sustainability, therefore, arises from the fact that, in order to fit the criteria of multi-scalar sustainability, this particular vision of sustainability (better access and use of the Greenway through landscaping and social amenities)<sup>352</sup> would be better used if implemented along the Greenway's entire length, not just the section under LLDC planning authority. This is because the small section of the Greenway that has been upgraded is largely underused, for it is not deemed to "go anywhere", as one planner at the London Borough of Newham remarked in an interview, and it is not commonly viewed as a formal social space. Considering that the LLDC regeneration is meant to benefit all of East London, the sudden end to LLDC landscaping of the Greenway at the boundary with Newham seems to make the landscaping merely just that – landscape – rather than part of an integrated multi-functional space with the potential for various visions of multi-scalar sustainability, as shown by the work done by Adams and Sutherland through the now disbanded London Development Agency.<sup>353</sup> We return to the potential of the Greenway as a multi-functional corridor and the impacts of localism in Chapter Six.

The Greenway in its current form presents us with two distinct types of greenspace. One half of the Greenway contains the formal greenspace, planned by the LLDC who have a remit for the sustainable planning of East London. The second, longer half is the Greenway under the London Borough of Newham which has had virtually no cosmetic upgrades since the 1990s, when some fencing and access was improved.<sup>354</sup> Returning to our discussion of eco-centrism and anthropocentrism, we can attempt to understand these two forms of urban nature along the Greenway in relation to these categories. This is *not* to suggest that they are opposites, but rather sit along a spectrum of more or less eco/anthropocentric. Indeed many scholars have considered the relationship between urban greening and theories of nature, particularly in sites like the QEOP Greenway which is, beyond the LLDC area, a form of *marginalia*.<sup>355</sup>

Marginal urban greenspaces like the Greenway are often places which are discovered by urban wanderers who wish to experience their unique sense of place and draw heavily on a sense of 'being' in the space in a phenomenological sense.<sup>356</sup> This has led to a series of discussions on how we should engage with these places and what this means for our relationship with them. Foster has argued that

<sup>351</sup> Adams and Sutherland, 'Greenway Vision Study February 2010', 2010.

<sup>352</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

<sup>353</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

<sup>354</sup> Interview with Richard Wadey, Sustainable Transport Officer, London Borough of Newham; Adams and Sutherland.

<sup>355</sup> Gandy, 'Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands'.

<sup>356</sup> Gandy, 'Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands'.

instead of “framing” urban wastelands as sites of experiential consumption, we must re-engage with the more “ambient” dimensions of human experience, and be “in” the space rather than merely gaze upon it.<sup>357</sup> However as Gandy points out, this is an eco-centric position which reifies the nature-urban binary.<sup>358</sup>

This reification is also apparent when we try to replicate a sense of the natural in the more formal planning we see in places like New York’s *High Line* where aesthetic transformations appeal to a sense of the natural – albeit a type of urban nature in which weeds and plants recolonise brownfield spaces. Although this takes a ‘secessionist approach’ to landscaping as its cue, the urge to present a fixed view of ‘nature’ is not very different to the impulses which drove English landscape gardeners in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to similarly rebel against formalism and thereby design gardens to seem as if they were inherently natural or ‘more natural’ than what came before them.<sup>359</sup> Gandy has further argued that in the case of the *High Line* there has been a process of “wasteland as artifice” – that is, the landscaping of the *High Line* seems to present a vision of urban nature more natural than nature itself; that it can be considered a simulacrum of what came before it. For example, cues have been taken from the weeds and shrubs that grow in the cracks between bricks and up walls, to give a sense of the authentically ‘wild’ urban experience.<sup>360</sup> However such places are heavily regulated and controlled and contain none of the weeds and unwanted growth of the overgrown marginalia that they are based upon, undermining the illusion that this indeed wild place.

Therefore we are left in a conceptual position whereby we have two contrasting ideas of urban nature – both of which explicitly attempt to overcome the binary of nature-urban, but end up reifying it either through an eco-centric romanticisation or in creating simulacra of nature, which also presents nature as an external object for the subject of human experience. The Head of Design of the LLDC at the time of research remarked that the QEOP is a site where the “pastoral meets the post-industrial”.<sup>361</sup> In this phrase she drew upon historic difficulties planners had in trying to conceptualise the Lea Valley – their various struggles to do this shown by Mann<sup>362</sup> owing to it containing vast tracts of pastoral land alongside 19<sup>th</sup> century infrastructure and post-industrial landscapes. Yet this “meeting” of the two sides seems to suggest further binary thinking in the formulation of the area’s design cues. In overcoming such an impasse, Gandy has argued that there is increasing amount of “loose space”,<sup>363</sup> or *terrain vague*,<sup>364</sup> whose numerous “aesthetic worlds” should be further acknowledged neither as

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<sup>357</sup> C Foster, ‘The Narrative and the Ambient in Environmental Aesthetics.’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 56.2 (1998), 127–37. in Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’, p. 1308.

<sup>358</sup> Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’, p. 1308.

<sup>359</sup> Hunt, *Greater Perfections*; Slater.

<sup>360</sup> Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’, p. 1309.

<sup>361</sup> Lecture by Kathryn Firth

<sup>362</sup> Mann.

<sup>363</sup> Thompson.

<sup>364</sup> Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’.

formal or informal, but spaces of ambivalence where a multitude of urban activity can take place.<sup>365</sup> This we will explore in relation to localism and the future of the Greenway in Chapter Six.

### 3.3.3.1 *A walk along the Greenway*

In the following chapter I will attempt to show the way in which policy has impacted upon the site in more detail, based on analysis of multi-scalar planning. It is therefore useful to demonstrate how we might view the Greenway as it currently is, having been planned by two contrasting, neighbouring authorities. Below I illustrate this through photographic evidence and secondary maps showing the physical differences in landscaping between the two planning authorities along the Greenway.

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<sup>365</sup> Gandy, 'Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands'. p. 1310.





Figure 2. Map of the proposed future of LLDC area with Greenway cutting through.<sup>366</sup>

<sup>366</sup> Source: <http://www.urbangeogeastlondon.org/locations.html>





Figure 3. Satellite image of Greenway.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Source: Google Maps, 2015



Figure 4. Greenway figure ground plan within 400m access.<sup>368</sup>

<sup>368</sup> Source: Adams and Sutherland. p. 6.





Figure 5. The LLDC Greenway during the 2012 Games.<sup>369</sup>



Figure 6. The LLDC Greenway after the 2012 Games: benches.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>370</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.



Figure 7. The LLDC Greenway: segregated lanes, but only in LLDC section.<sup>371</sup>



Figure 8. The LLDC Greenway: way-finding.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>372</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.





Figure 9. The LLDC Greenway: manicured and public art.<sup>373</sup>



Figure 10. The end of one nature: the LLDC/Newham council boundary.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>374</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.



Figure 11. Bridge over Abbey Creek, demarcates border between LLDC and LBN.<sup>375</sup>



Figure 12. Looking back at LLDC "nature" from border with Newham.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>376</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.





Figure 13. Typical section of Newham Greenway: lack of amenities.<sup>377</sup>



Figure 14. The Greenway near Plaistow and a cycling group: more amenities but no cycle segregation.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>378</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.



Figure 15. Entrance to Greenway near Plaistow at road crossing.<sup>379</sup>

In the pictures above we see two types of landscape planning along the Greenway. The first is where the Greenway falls within the LLDC's planning authority and as such has been planned in a manner fitting with the LLDC's remit to make the QEOP a sustainable new piece of city. It has therefore adopted the type of aesthetics which are far more people-friendly, clean and well-kept. We see this clearly in the maintenance of the greenspaces, the width of the paths and how they are segregated for pedestrian or cycle use. We can deduct from this that the Greenway within Newham is more unkempt, or closer to the notion of a *terrain vague*.

In many ways Greenways in general provide a strong example which shows the relationship between scale and the natural in cities. Contemporary planners look to Greenways, green corridors and healthy pathways as part of the broad rethinking of sustainable urban planning and design.<sup>380</sup> As noted by Hebbert, contemporary sustainable urban design, seeks to mobilise nature in the city at all scales. As opposed to techniques in the early and mid-twentieth century, urban greenspace is now far more enclosed and designed-in as part of mixed-use strategies, as opposed to being unbounded and opened-out as part of public spaces.<sup>381</sup> Greenways and green-corridors provide increased biodiversity, reduced air temperature, opportunities for urban food production, community space and transport connections. But most importantly, their linear form through the city means that they increase their proximity to far

<sup>379</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>380</sup> Jack Ahern, 'Greenways as a Planning Strategy', *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 33 (1995), 131–55; Margaret Bryant, 'Urban Landscape Conservation and the Role of Ecological Greenways at Local and Metropolitan Scales', *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 76 (2006), 23–44; Thompson.

<sup>381</sup> Hebbert; Thompson.



more urban space, than a green belt on the edge of the city, which is only accessible to people living at the edge, or who would need transport to get there.

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have shown the different ways geographic scale is considered and frames the various ways of understanding notions of the local. This emerges from seeing scales as existing as idealisms, as material realities or discursively produced. We found that the Localism Act uses the scale of the 'local' in a discursive manner which has a profound effect on the very material differences in equality and between locales. We then looked at the various ways nature has been valued and how this feeds into how planners and social thinkers have understood the relationship between the urban and the natural. We focused on urban greenspaces to demonstrate three periods of planning for greenspace across various scales. We showed how recently there has been a return to greenspace planning as part of the post-modern trend of re-enclosure. Along with these processes come additional dilemmas such as the degree to which these marginal urban landscape improvements have any real impact on global environmental change or whether they are just tools of gentrification or a romanticisation of urban wastelands. In the last section we used photographic evidence to show the two main types of greenspace along the Greenway, one which was planned by the LLDC and represents ambitions to become a more used functional landscape and reflects the regeneration efforts of the LLDC through its landscaping. The other is the remainder of the Greenway which has not been planned in an integrated manner despite still being heavily used by local people and cyclists.

These two types of urban nature, produced by specific governance arrangements helps us to think about the issues of sustainability and scale in the next chapter. Firstly it highlights how through landscape design, sustainability agendas can have a surface appearance through physical design but are not connected to any particular sustainability metrics such as air quality, urban cooling or carbon emissions reduction. This we see clearly in the LLDC's landscaping. This reminds us that sustainability too often is a hollow discourse and we must interrogate it further in order to understand the assumptions and associations around its meaning from the authority who is using it. This we will do in the next chapter through a policy analysis of different planning policy documents.

Secondly it reminds us of the importance of scale in sustainability in two ways. Firstly it can be argued that the LLDC's landscaping of the Greenway stems from an understanding of 'best practice' design which reflects an internationalisation of sustainable landscaping, as we see with Atlanta's *Belt Line* and New York's *High Line*. Thus we have to question whether the 'sustainable regeneration' of the LLDC can be read through how it treats landscape and the extent to which it is rooted in locally

responsive circumstances or, has just been “rolled-out” in the words of Raco.<sup>382</sup> Secondly it reminds us that sustainable urbanism must be thought about in a multi-scalar fashion. Greenways are inherently multi-scalar structures,<sup>383</sup> in that they are simultaneously of local and metropolitan significance. Through the treatment of landscape planning along the Greenway as a proxy for thinking about sustainable urbanism, it is clear that the Greenway is not being thought about in this way but, as we show in the next chapter, different tiers of governance are conceiving sustainability in East London in different ways. This is done through examining the relative importance they give to social, economic and environmental concerns. The revelation of strategic sustainability tensions at different scales of governance allows us to see past the idea that the tripartite model of sustainability which promotes ‘balance’ as a panacea.<sup>384</sup> Instead I open up the scalar tensions inherent to sustainability planning, and reveal the material, substantive policy differences that are silenced or masked under a post-political idea of ‘sustainable development’.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’.

<sup>383</sup> Bryant.

<sup>384</sup> Loftus; Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>385</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

## 4 Multi-scalar sustainable policy planning in East London

### 4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter we saw how sustainability can vary according the scale over which it is being advocated. In this chapter, we present the findings from a policy analysis to see how sustainability is framed at different scales of planning. I use the framework derived from Lombardi. *et al.* to measure sustainability discourses against conceptions of socio-economic equality versus eco-centrism. We first present a brief summary of localism in relation to the general neo-liberalisation of planning and the rise of sustainable planning in England. At the end of the chapter I reflect on the degree to which divergent forms of sustainability in these plans are based on the varying strategic aims based on scale, from the national to the metropolitan to the local. In the following chapters we return to the urban context to see how these policies are manifest in various scales in the city.

### 4.2 The emergence of Localism and sustainable development in English planning

The *Localism Act 2011*<sup>386</sup> came into being on the back of a wave anti-state discourse which denounced New Labour for being target driven, wasteful and out of touch.<sup>387</sup> The rhetoric from the Coalition government in respect of the clauses of the Act sounded radical and paradigm shifting, but the components of the policy – its ideological as well as functional elements – are not original, and exist in a history of scalar tampering over time, alongside planning's increasing deregulation. As we saw in the last chapter, the local can have various meanings; it can be named by those with a common sense over a bounded area, it can be spaces of engagement and empowerment, or it may be imposed by a state. It is inherently scalar and it may be measurable in the form of data and statistics, or physical space. It may be abstract in the form of mapping, or it may be a political discourse. Here however, we wish to look at how the idea of the local as a site of action that has been utilised by planning policy makers to legitimise the Localism Act, itself a form of legislation which has historical

<sup>386</sup> Crown Copyright, 'Localism Act 2011'.

<sup>387</sup> DCLG, *The Plain English Guide to the Localism Act* (London, 2011); Iain Deas, 'Towards Post-Political Consensus in Urban Policy? Localism and the Emerging Agenda for Regeneration Under the Cameron Government', *Planning Practice and Research*, 28 (2013), 65 – 82. Mark Baker and Cecilia Wong, 'The Delusion of Strategic Spatial Planning: What's Left After the Labour Government's English Regional Experiment?', *Planning Practice and Research*, 2013, 37–41

roots in earlier planning reform and re-scaling.

### 4.2.1 Neo-liberalisation and re-scaling

The use of the term ‘neo-liberalism’ as a catch-all term for the general political-economic structure, and in particular its description of all-power market-forces which dismantle the state, has been critiqued by Cochrane and others.<sup>388</sup> In order to recognise the agency of actors, temporal and spatial dynamics of place, space, society and economy, it is more useful to focus on neo-liberalism as an ongoing process or strategy, or rather, neo-liberalisation. In reference to urban planning and its neo-liberalisation, this more dynamic framework allows Allmendinger and Haughton to identify seven phases of urban planning since 1979,<sup>389</sup> which largely reflect paradigmatic shifts in neo-liberalisation more generally (Table 1).

Olesen writes that there have been three phases of planning under neo-liberalism in northwest Europe since the 1970s.<sup>390</sup> The first can be epitomised by the *laissez-faire* approach which lasted from roughly 1980 to roughly 1995. This period is what we saw above – the deregulation of the planning and regeneration through private companies. The second period he named *aides-faire* and lines up with philosophies of the ‘Third Way’: still essentially neo-liberal but using state-funds to under-write private investment and using governance to ‘join-up’ and push development in certain directions using QUANGOS and arms-length organisations. The third-sector played a distinct role in this period also. The current period Olesen names *roll-with-it* planning, in which rather than either rolling-back or rebuilding the state, as is the case with the former two phases, the current phase has emerged into the phase of the post-political which a focus merely just on the governmentality.

In the 1990s ‘New Localism’ was the name given to explain the turn to the local scale of the provision of urban policy and planning.<sup>391</sup> Marvin and Guy write that “The new localism is a powerful discourse shared by a coalition of academics and policy makers who have developed close links between research and a succession of local policy initiatives”.<sup>392</sup> ‘New localism’ would add a stronger communitarian focus to the existing urban regeneration logic, and became more targeted and strategic.<sup>393</sup> For example, the City Challenge concentrated resources on 57 of the most deprived neighbourhoods across the UK.<sup>394</sup> Other related initiatives that were set up under this period were the

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<sup>388</sup> Cochrane; Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’.

<sup>389</sup> Allmendinger and Haughton, ‘The Evolution and Trajectories of English Spatial Governance: “Neoliberal” Episodes in Planning’.

<sup>390</sup> Olesen.

<sup>391</sup> Lawrence Pratchett, ‘Local Autonomy, Local Democracy and the “New Localism”’, *Political Studies*, 52 (2004), 358–75; Deas and Ward.

<sup>392</sup> Marvin and Guy.

<sup>393</sup> Deas and Ward.

<sup>394</sup> Cochrane.

New Deal for the Communities, the Urban Renaissance agenda, the Sustainable Communities plan, and the set-up of the Social Exclusion unit to 'join-up' specifically urban problems which were previously tackled by different government departments.<sup>395</sup> In general this turn in planning was associated broadly with the Third Way politics of Blair and Clinton, a pro-growth approach which also advocated investment profits into communities and public services.

The general urge for more decentralised governance and planning has been supported by all governments in the UK since the 1990s.<sup>396</sup> The Localism Act is a continuation of this trend. The major difference however has been the removal of any notion of top-down provision of public benefits to regenerate cities and inner city areas, such as the Pathfinder initiatives in northern cities, neighbourhood renewal schemes and the single regeneration budget under the previous Labour governments.<sup>397</sup> Today's brand of localism does not come with additional programmes of investment and improvement, as was the case under the New Localism.

The shape of governance changed during the New Localism of the 1990s too, both vertically and horizontally. 'Scaling down' was the name given to the planning downwards in a scalar hierarchy, from national government to regions and cities.<sup>398</sup> 'Scaling out' became the name of the horizontal insertion of quasi-government organisations such as regional development agencies and agencies such as the Homes and Communities Agency, which reflected the increased sophistication of the state apparatus in both being apart from national government but promoting entrepreneurialism and growth using state subsidy, and often being overseen by a central government department. For example Gerry Stoker defined the New Localism as "a strategy aimed at devolving power and resources away from central control and towards front-line managers, local democratic structures and local consumers and communities".<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Cochrane.

<sup>396</sup> Deas.

<sup>397</sup> Deas.

<sup>398</sup> Cohen and McCarthy.

<sup>399</sup> Stoker, 2004 p.117 in Davoudi and Madanipour, 'Localism and Neo-Liberal Governmentality'.

## Multi-scalar sustainable policy planning in East London

**Table 1. Adapted from Allmendinger and Haughton<sup>400</sup> and Olesen<sup>401</sup>**

Years	Policy paradigm	Selected moments	Neo-liberal paradigm
1979 – 1991	‘Roll-back’: Deregulatory and pro-business.	<p><b>1980</b> Local Government, Planning and Land Act introduced Enterprise Zones and Urban Development Corporations.</p> <p><b>1985</b> ‘Lifting the Burden’ White Paper.</p> <p><b>1986</b> Housing and Planning Act introduced Simplified Planning Zones. ‘The Future of Development Plans’ Consultation, 1986 removing the need to prepare development plans.</p>	<b>Roll-back</b>
1991 – 1997	‘State steering’: Centralized hierarchical policy, central guidance strengthened.	<p><b>1991</b> Planning and Compensation Act introduced ‘planned’ approach representing a ‘u’ turn.</p> <p><b>1994</b> Government Office for Regions enhanced.</p> <p><b>1997</b> Kyoto agreement.</p>	<b>Roll-out</b>
1997 – 2000	‘Rolled out’ neoliberalism: pragmatic and fluid. New scalar fix. Devolution to nations and establishment RDAs.	<p><b>1998</b> Modernizing Planning Green Paper, 1998.</p> <p><b>1998</b> Urban Task Force Urban Renaissance.</p> <p><b>1998</b> Regional Development Agency Act.</p>	<b>Roll-out</b>
2000 – 2002	Speed and certainty: rescaling agendas and debates	<p><b>2000 Local Government Act:</b> introduced local Strategic Partnerships and Community Strategies.</p> <p><b>2001 CBI Planning Brief</b> critiqued slowness and uncertainty of planning.</p> <p><b>2001 Planning Green Paper</b> proposed to speed up planning through new systems of development plans such as Business Planning Zones.</p>	<b>Roll-out</b>

<sup>400</sup> Allmendinger and Haughton, ‘The Evolution and Trajectories of English Spatial Governance: “Neoliberal” Episodes in Planning’.

<sup>401</sup> Olesen.

## Multi-scalar sustainable policy planning in East London

2002 – 2006	Spatial planning: planning without conflict, searching for ‘sustainable development’ balance.	<p><b>2003 Sustainable Communities Plan</b>, emphasising growth.</p> <p><b>2004 Barker Review</b> focused on housing delivery.</p> <p><b>2005</b> introduction of ‘spatial planning’ Local Area/Multi-Area agreements introduced to help promote sub-regional and multi-tier partnerships.</p>	<b>Roll-out</b>
2006 – 2010	Economic-led deliver: competition focused.	<p><b>2008 Planning Act</b> introduced Infrastructure Planning Commission.</p> <p><b>2008</b> PPS 12 streamlined plan-led approach.</p> <p><b>2009 Development Management Consultation</b>, further attempt to create a pro-development culture change in planning.</p>	<b>Roll-out</b>
2010 – present	Pro-market Localism. Deregulation of controls and targets. Loosing of policy cascade and hierarchy. Simplification of NPPF.	<b>2011 Localism Act</b> abolished regional planning, introduced neighbourhood planning, abolished targets.	<b>Roll- with-it</b>

### 4.2.2 Sustainable development and English planning

Although sustainable urbanism was not necessarily a ‘Labour’ policy, it was during their time in office from 1997 that the sustainable development aims of The Brundtland Report began to make themselves felt in academic thinking about cities and in urban design policy.<sup>402</sup> The strongest articulation of this was Richard Rogers’s and the Urban Task Force’s work *Towards an Urban Renaissance*.<sup>403</sup> This was an attempt to move away from decades of anti-urban policy in UK and combine new methods of re-urbanisation with both economic growth and social justice that were also environmentally sustainable.<sup>404</sup> The team used planning and design to argue that by building at higher densities around public transport hubs, we could improve well-being, reduce carbon emissions, build attractive places, and support businesses. Rogers’ sustainable urbanism is along the lines of Campbell’s tripartite balance of society, economy and environment, but expressed through functional design.<sup>405</sup>

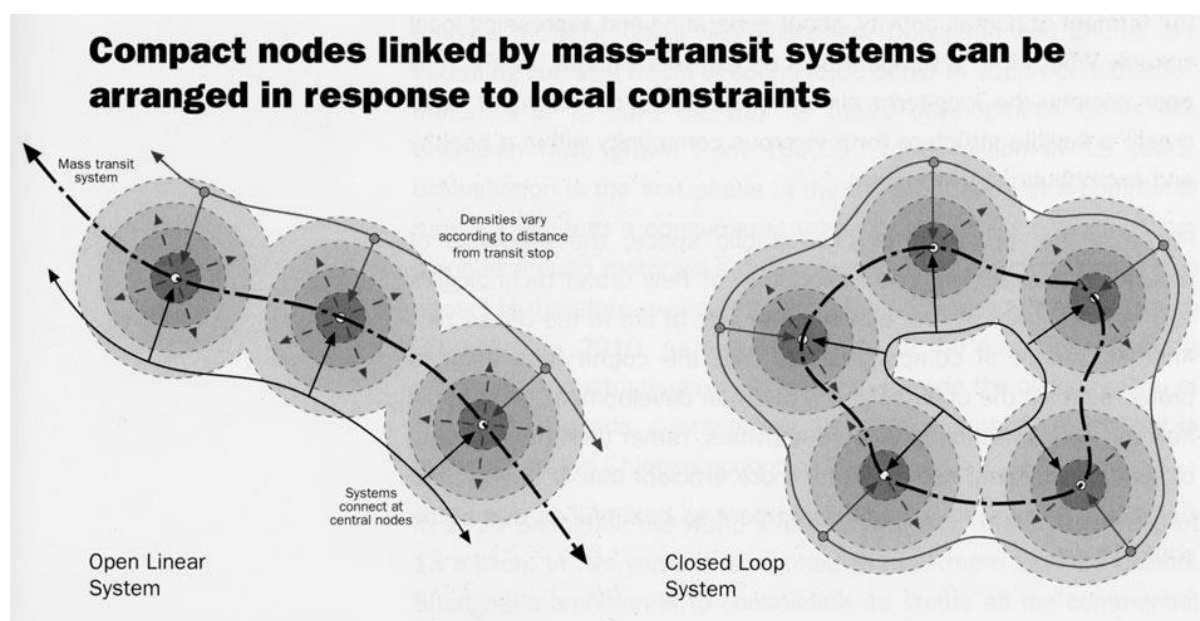


Figure 16. Rogers’ compact city model.<sup>406</sup>

This work led to the establishment of a White Paper in 2000 which places Rogers’ recommendations into the Planning Policy Guidance statements (PPGs). Thus for the first time a sustainable urban vision was at the heart of planning policy in UK. This however came on the back of a growing list of policies that had been developed throughout the 1990s, particularly from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit

<sup>402</sup> Rydin.

<sup>403</sup> Claire Colomb, ‘Unpacking New Labour’s ‘Urban Renaissance’ Agenda: Towards a Socially Sustainable Reurbanization of British Cities?’, *Planning Practice and Research*, 22 (2007), 1 – 24.

<sup>404</sup> Colomb.

<sup>405</sup> Scott Campbell, ‘Green Cities , Growing Cities’, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 62.3 (1996), 296–312.

<sup>406</sup> Source: Lord Richard Rogers, *Cities for a Small Planet* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997).



that had led to Agenda 21.<sup>407</sup> This was to be “a comprehensive world-wide programme for sustainable development in the twenty-first century”.<sup>408</sup>

**Table 2. Timeline of Sustainability policies in the UK<sup>409</sup>**

<b>Sustainability policies in the UK in respect to planning and urbanism</b>	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>
Sustainable development: the UK strategy	1994
A Better Quality of Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social progress</li> <li>• Protection of the environment</li> <li>• Prudent use of natural resources</li> <li>• Maintenance of high level of economic growth</li> </ul>	1999
Sustainable communities: building for the future	2003
Securing the Future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living within environmental limits</li> <li>• Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society</li> <li>• Achieving a sustainable economy</li> <li>• Promoting good governance</li> <li>• Using sound science responsibly</li> </ul>	2005

Critiques of this conception of sustainable urban development have been since been articulated, and usually critique either the social or environmental aspects of these sets of policies. There has been widespread concern about the kind of social sustainability that was proposed. Although the redevelopment of brownfield sites, and the densification of the city is to be commended for reducing sprawl and increasing urban activity, the type of activities in these areas have been problematic.<sup>410</sup>

Cullingworth and Nadin stress the concerns raised by Swyngedouw, Loftus and Raco that sustainability has become a meaningless term that masks economic growth.<sup>411</sup> Cullingworth and Nadin critique the ‘holistic’ approach to sustainable development for allowing the proliferation of the

<sup>407</sup> Cullingworth and Nadin.

<sup>408</sup> Cullingworth and Nadin, p. 256.

<sup>409</sup> Cullingworth and Nadin.

<sup>410</sup> Colomb.

<sup>411</sup> Cullingworth and Nadin; Loftus; Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’; Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

idea that sustainability is “everything”, rather than acknowledging that there are natural and fundamental trade-offs. For example, they note that the 1999 UK strategy is to be measured solely through indicators that may not capture the complexity of the environment and it is clear that the eco-modernisation model is a dominant rationality or “business as usual economic growth”.<sup>412</sup> An example of these issues is highlighted strongly by the implementation of the sustainable communities plan. The plan used brownfield at sites in northern England and the Thames Gateway to build new communities based on sustainable design principles. Critiques from Brownhill and Raco have shown how such communities were designed following specific indicators but fundamentally did not manage to break out of the neo-liberal mould which ultimately does not mitigate against global environmental change.<sup>413</sup>

### 4.3 Planning policy analysis

#### 4.3.1 Adapting the Lombardi *et al.* method

In this section we show that far from being neutral, sustainability discourses in the case of authorities which operate over East London, differ depending on the scale over which they are deployed. In order to analyse our policy documents, which represent a single scale of planning policy which has an impact on the Greenway, we have acknowledged the precedent of Lombardi *et al.* who conducted an analysis of urban sustainability discourse using a framework to quantify their data sources to be able to meaningfully assess their approach to sustainability.<sup>414</sup> They argue firstly that sustainability is not a neutral concept and it reflects more about the power relations which produce it as a discourse, rather than the empirical problem of the environment in itself. They then bring this problem to the city, arguing that urban regeneration in its form since the 1970s is largely a failure, and writing:

A significant body of evidence clearly demonstrates how attempts by city governments to live by their growth agendas (in other words status quo approaches to urban regeneration) have almost universally failed to deliver widespread and sustained social and environmental benefits... Indeed, urban regeneration itself, as a policy agenda to address inner-city failure, is coming under increased criticism in the UK and elsewhere.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Cullingworth and Nadin, p. 256.

<sup>413</sup> Brownhill and Carpenter; Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’.

<sup>414</sup> Rachel Lombardi and others, ‘Conceptualising Sustainability in UK Urban Regeneration: A Discursive Formation’, *Urban Studies*, 48 (2011), 273–296.

<sup>415</sup> Lombardi and others. p.281

This quote supports the point made in chapter three, that sustainability can often use certain devices such as landscaping, or tokenism, to mask the fact that sustainable regeneration projects are usually tied to a status quo position of sustainable development which privileges economic growth over social and environmental concerns. The tripartite model of sustainable development is a popular and common one and as we mentioned earlier lends itself to a simplification of sustainable development as a problem that can be tackled through a simple balancing act, without consideration of space or scale. As such it falls into an anthropocentric approach to valuing nature, where the problem of climate change is an instrumental challenge for humans rather than inherent one for life on earth. As mentioned the very notion of *sustainable development* is rooted in the idea that it is possible to have a sustainable future on the same developmental trajectories as today.<sup>416</sup> Although there are other modes of sustainable development, such as the three-legged stool outlined earlier, only one of these models is closest to understanding that growth is not without limits, which is the concentric rings model where economy and society are linked as a socio-economy constrained by the environment.<sup>417</sup>

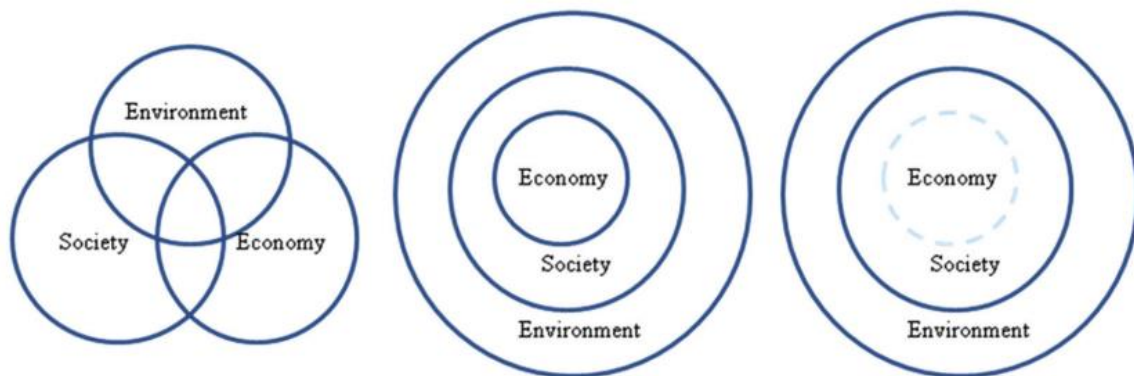


Figure 17. Models of sustainable development in Lombardi *et. al.* (2007).<sup>418</sup>

In order to assess discourses of sustainable development, Lombardi *et al.* take the two elements of the concentric ring model and create an axis of radicalism. To express socio-economic variation, they create an axis of 'less egalitarian' and 'more egalitarian'. To express the environmental question of the anthropocentric-ecocentric divide, they create an axis of 'techno-centred' and 'eco-centred'. Each policy document that they analyse is measured and plotted along both axes and is plotted somewhere in the graph. This method they take from earlier work by Hopwood *et al.*<sup>419</sup>

<sup>416</sup> Campbell.

<sup>417</sup> Rydin.

<sup>418</sup> Source: Lombardi and others, p. 276.

<sup>419</sup> B. Hopwood, M. Mellor and G. O'Brien, 'Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches', *Sustainable Development*, 13 (2005), 38–52.

## Multi-scalar sustainable policy planning in East London

When both axes are placed on a graph, Hopwood provide three states of change. This ranges from 'status quo', to 'reform' and 'transformation'. A status quo situation is one in which socio-economic conditions remain the same; neo-liberalism, inequality, continued growth and resource exploitation. We would solve environmental problems through technical solutions that do not work with the environment. For example, in flood defences, we might spend billions more on concrete sea walls, rather than giving up some areas of land to natural sea flooding and marshes.

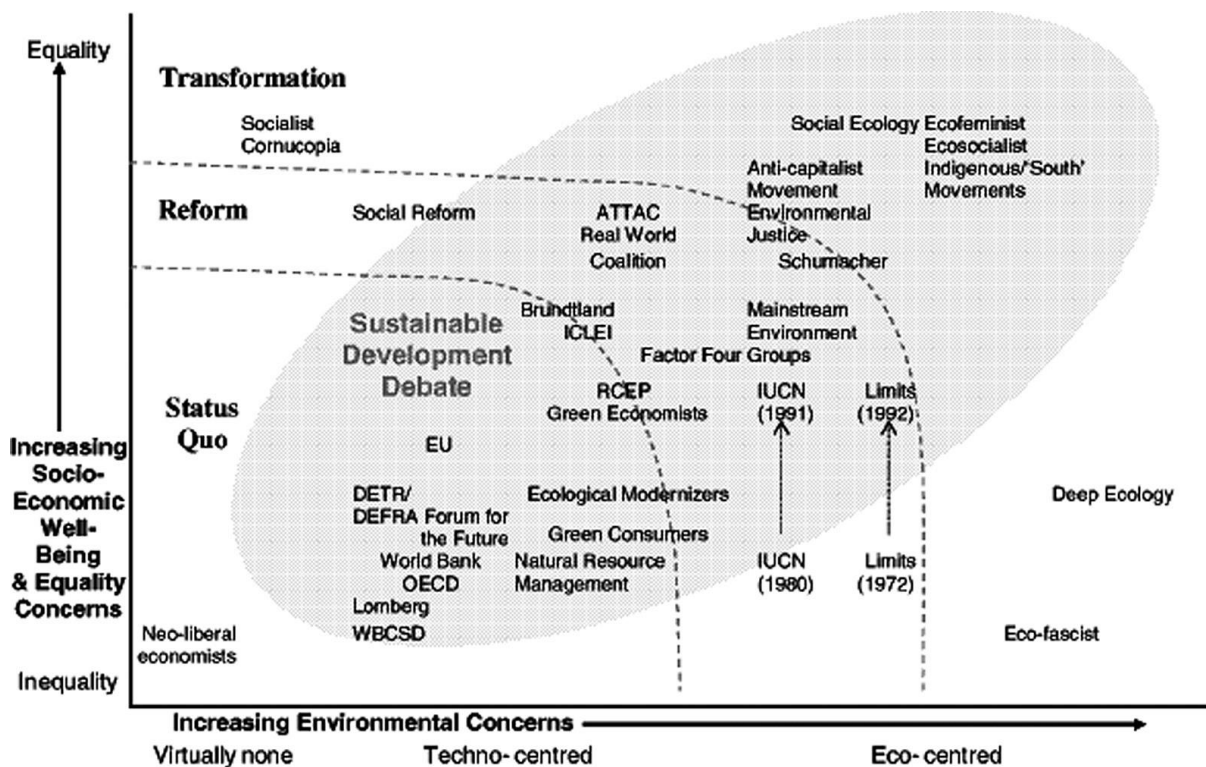


Figure 18. The Hopwood graph of sustainable development discourse.<sup>420</sup>

Under a reform discourse, policy advocates reform of the current system but with the main structures of socio-economy still in place.<sup>421</sup> We might also have more radical approaches to environmental problems like having 100% recycling, zero-carbon housing and renewable energies, but these technical approaches still rely on a more anthropocentric model of development. For example, a consumer society would still produce waste in other countries, in the same way as we outsource our manufacturing today to places like China. Under transformation, society is completely re-ordered from the top-down. At its most extreme, capitalism is abolished, and eco-centric solutions dominate so that human society is based purely on environmental terms.<sup>422</sup> Nature is valued intrinsically rather instrumentally so that it cannot be extracted for capitalistic gain.

<sup>420</sup> Source: Lombardi and others, p. 278.

<sup>421</sup> Lombardi and others.

<sup>422</sup> Lombardi and others.

The graph places a variety of policy documents and philosophies in these three realms, and they are assessed according to how weak or strong they are in respect to each axis. At the weak side, they have a status quo discourse, and on the strong side they have a transformation discourse.

A weak sustainability conceptualisation would lead to a bias for technological fixes and other selective environmental goals independent of issues of social and economic equity.

A strong sustainability conceptualisation would adopt an approach that saw changes in the socioeconomic structure to preserve planetary life services—or, in popular language, ‘the environment’.<sup>423</sup>

In addition to the policy documents, political-economic ideologies are also scattered through the three fields of transformation. For example, ‘Deep Ecology’ is placed as radically eco-centred and somewhat egalitarian, thus placing it within ‘Transformation’. Eco-fascism is placed in the same position in terms of eco-centricity, but believes in less social equality. Despite this, it is still within the transformation field.<sup>424</sup>

The policy documents they analyse are not given *a priori* values, but values in relation to the general landscape of existing policies that have been produced. But by analysing them in detail as discourses, we can understand how they understand the concepts we are dealing with here such as sustainability. In order to ascertain ‘weak’ and ‘strong’, Lombardi’s example from Birmingham provides us with a method of qualitative and some quantitative evaluation.

They start with a ‘Line of enquiry’ and their example is sustainable urbanism. When the issue is merely raised (status quo), it would be to propose technology as a solution, but fundamentally not alter any socio-economic structures. This would be a form of sustainability discourse which “fits neatly into the paradigm of Western modernity emphasising technological progress and optimism, scientific knowledge, individual autonomy and the free market”.<sup>425</sup> When the issue is stressed (reform), it would focus on reducing carbon use, reusing materials, and having a healthier ecology. At the most extreme end of the scale is transformation, which is when the issue is deemed critical. This posits a total and complete goal of changing society to live within our environmental capacities, in their words “Transformation of society and/or human relations with the environment”.<sup>426</sup>

In their specific case study, Lombardi *et al.* use a systematic method of ascribing quantitative values to both interviews and policy documents, in order to assess whether issues are raised, stressed or deemed critical. However, there are limitations to this method and it is not one which has been followed in this thesis which has taken a looser approach but acknowledged the overall structure of

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<sup>423</sup> Lombardi and others. p. 287.

<sup>424</sup> Lombardi and others. p. 287.

<sup>425</sup> Lombardi and others. p. 290.

<sup>426</sup> Lombardi and others. p. 287.

interpretation described by Fairclough.<sup>427</sup> Despite the divergence in method at this stage, the framework of evaluating urban sustainability discourse using the method provided by Lombardi *et al.* provides a highly useful and structured way of looking at the situation in East London.

One area where this study wishes to depart from the Lombardi method, is the recognition that sustainability is inherently acted over scale. This means that scale may determine where policy documents fall within the framework mentioned above. The Lombardi *et al.* case of Birmingham is about a single regeneration area within the city. Although plans and policies may tie in to national, metropolitan, and neighbourhood tiers of policy-making, it is not explicitly mentioned. This is problematic. As Swyngedouw and Heynen state, “the scalar geometry of urban political ecology welds together processes operating at a variety of nested and articulated geographical scales”.<sup>428</sup> This means that we cannot look at sustainability policy through purely a site-based epistemology as encouraged by Marston *et al.* and need to understand how multiple levels of planning policy and their scalar relationships affect outcomes on physical space, which is also imbued with physical scale.

Chapter Six of this thesis will reveal how policy affects the situation on the ground. At the lowest level, we will look at the LLDC Local Plan and the Newham Core Strategy. The next level is the London Plan, which dictates some aspects of the Local Plans. The highest level we will look at is the National Planning Policy Framework which gives guidance to all planning authorities in the UK on sustainability issues. Thus all plans imagine the site being influenced by a column of scalar planning policies from the National to the Local. But as we shall see the policy hierarchy is more complex than a simple chain of command: there is divergence around the meaning of sustainability at each level. We look at each plan in relation to the meaning of sustainability, and also how they treat sustainability in the document in terms of where it sits and what it is associated with for example, growth, jobs or housing.

### 4.3.2 Analysis

#### 4.3.2.1 *NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework*

The NPPF was brought in shortly after the Coalition came to power in 2010. It sought to simplify the existing Planning Policy Guidance statements that were developed under the previous government and in doing so, the NPPF was reduced substantially in size and complexity. The simplification of

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<sup>427</sup> Fairclough.

<sup>428</sup> Erik Swyngedouw and Nikolas C Heynen, ‘Urban Political Ecology, Justice and the Politics of Scale’, *Antipode*, 35 (2003), 898–918 (p. 95).

planning policy was justified on the grounds that it made planning easier to understand for ordinary people and was less bureaucratic.<sup>429</sup> Therefore there is much scope in the NPPF for flexibility, but also ambiguity, confusion and opportunism.

It must be stated too that the NPPF is not a national spatial plan and does not emanate from any national planning authority. It is a set of national guidelines to bring coherence to the planning practice in England, but is mainly a way for central government to use planning as a tool to push their general agenda which, as will be seen, is economic growth above all.

The NPPF views sustainability as a balancing act between social, economic and environmental needs. Therefore the first thing to say about this document is that we can classify it as post-political; it conforms to the tripartite model of sustainability that offers no real idea of how the three arenas work in the real work of politics and society. If this is the model we are working with however, we must test it to see if the NPPF lives up to its own claim that sustainable development is the balance of the social, the environmental and the economic. If we know this, we can at least argue that an attempt is being made in the direction of ‘reform’.

The central aim of the NPPF is that Local Authorities should plan “in favour of sustainable development”.<sup>430</sup> It is generally held by its authors that the planning system is bureaucratic and holds up development, as per the Localism Act, so it is not surprising that the National level planning guidance encourages development at the local level. The words ‘sustainable’ and ‘development’ are clarified and resolved to mean the balance we discussed above, however the phrase ‘presumption in favour of’, means that a planning committee should, if there is an equal pressure between development either going ahead or not going ahead, the permission should be granted.

The economic role is highlighted most strongly and environmentalism highlighted weakly throughout the document. Interestingly, communities are given a strong support in the shadow of Localism. The structure of the document is such that economic growth comes first, followed by vibrant towns, and nearest the end, is meeting the challenges of climate change and protecting green spaces. This leaves the question open as to whether the initial statements are more important than the latter ones. Of course this would be denied as the document states that the social, economic and environmental should all be interdependent.

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<sup>429</sup> DCLG.

<sup>430</sup> Crown Copyright, *National Planning Policy Framework*. p. 3.

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Figure 19. NPPF contents page.<sup>431</sup>

Thus we can see that the overall document framework rests on the tripartite model of sustainable development. We will now go into more detail into the specific sections relating to sustainable to see how closely they line up with their own assertions of sustainable development.

Under the first policy *Building a strong, competitive economy* there is an assumption that the global competition is unavoidable. It looks to a future in which the economic system is the same as today but believes that we can also have sustainability at the same time. The emphasis here is on securing jobs and building a strong and resilient economy. As this was drafted during a recession, it makes no surprise that economic priorities are at the fore, but it shows how sustainability is being used again to soften the economic approach. Although it encourages sustainable land-use based on the Richard Rogers' method of regenerating brownfield sites and creating multi-functional and mixed-used developments in cities, this is not different to what had come before, and the ways in which this type

<sup>431</sup> Source: Crown Copyright, *National Planning Policy Framework*.



of development could be sustainable – for example, shorter car journeys and healthier commutes – is not mentioned, which points to a lack of knowledge of planning theory altogether. This is also a techno-centred solution. Therefore in socio-economic terms, it does not wish for major changes, as no mention is made about reducing inequality or that there can be any economic alternatives. In terms of solutions, the land use model proposed is a techno-centred approach and so we must consider this a status quo position.

Section two proposes *ensuring the vitality of town centres*. We can read this in two ways. First, there is the need to keep places distinctive and vibrant, which ties into the localism agenda, emphasising the local. We must always remember that the Regional Plans have been abolished and that the Local is the primary scale of intervention. But the idea of the vibrant centre, is again a hangover from Rogers but again does not view it in sustainable terms like for example ‘resilience’ or indeed what kind of vibrant towns could realise a low carbon future. Like section 1, although the policies could feed easily into the compact city narrative, no explicit mention is made here. Instead the vibrancy of town centres is promoted for economic growth and ‘sense of place’. Again, we must judge this section as a status quo position.

It is only near the end of the document where we come across specific guidance relating to climate change explicitly. Section nine for example on Green Belts reifies the reasons as to why we should protect them. This is mainly to prevent sprawl, to promote the beauty of the landscape, to promote sensible use of brownfield land first, and to prevent cities from becoming agglomerations. As we saw in the previous chapter, Green Belt policy could be seen as a pseudo-scientific policy whereby the idea of the Green Belt is more important than its actual reality. The crystallisation of this position is revealed by a clause which states that renewable infrastructure should not be built on Green Belt land unless proof is shown that they adequately deal with reducing emissions.

*When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources*<sup>432</sup>

The use of the phrase ‘may include’ opens up the scope for ambiguity and contestation over whether or not renewable energy projects actually provide ‘the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources’. Thus the NPPF is not making a clear statement on whether or not wind-farms contribute to sustainable development. Given that they are a

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<sup>432</sup> Crown Copyright, *National Planning Policy Framework*. p. 21.

renewable energy source and would signal our transition away from a carbon-intensive economy, this is another ‘status quo’ position.

Section 10, near the end of the document is the first section to explicitly articulate policies relating to tackling climate change. As mentioned it could have been possible to weave the struggle against climate change through the entire document. For example in section 1 on economic growth, it could have been mentioned that growth will be conditional on reducing carbon emissions or that growth will be re-invested into schemes that lower carbon emissions. Section 10 reads

*Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development*<sup>433</sup>

If these aims are so central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, why is this policy at the end of document? It continues to advocate the usual technical solutions to be found in any textbook on climate change mitigation and adaptation: planning in ways that reduce carbon emissions, building standards such as BREEM on new buildings. In sum, all of the solutions proposed amount to techno-centred solutions which propose the same form of socio-economic relations as currently exist. Thus even the section which explicitly deals with climate change is a status quo position.

In summary, we assessed that the National Planning Policy Framework holds a status quo position in sustainability discourse. Despite claiming that sustainability is a balance between the social, economic and environmental, the document is heavily weighted towards economic growth, or a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’, which means where there is no good reason for a development not to be constructed, it should go ahead. The structure of the document places the economic priority at the top of the document and where climate change is dealt with explicitly we find this near the end. Despite the claim that sustainable development should run through the document like a thread, we actually find little evidence of a genuine balance between social, economic or environmental priorities in any of the sub-sections, but rather as mention a focus on the economic. Where mitigation and adaptation to climate change is mentioned, it is does so in order to sustain the current socio-economic system, and uses techno-centric solutions to do this.

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<sup>433</sup> Crown Copyright, *National Planning Policy Framework*. pp. 21-22.

### 4.3.2.2 *The London Plan*

The next plan to affect the situation on the ground is the London Plan. Falling between the NPPF and the Local Plans of each London Borough, the Plan exists to combine national priorities with London-wide strategic ones, and so adds another layer of conformity to the London Boroughs. The London Plan was simplified by Mayor Boris Johnson (in similar fashion to the simplification of the NPPF by the national government), from a longer document into a more condensed one. It outlines London's strategic plan for the next 30 years.

Many large conurbations around the world recognise their role in reducing carbon emissions and London is no exception. In some cases London has lead the way on some sustainability issues such as implementing a congestion charge and a low-emissions zone. Where London differs from the NPPF is that the whole jurisdiction of the London Plan is urban, whereas the NPPF has to guide and manage the planning tensions between rural and urban areas. Therefore it is no surprise that the London Plan has a *de facto* sustainable development agenda, as nearly all urban policies have sustainable development as a central aim.

The way London is governed plays a role in how London is planned for and the outcomes of plans. Before the Localism Act, the London Plan was implemented by the Regional Development Agency known as the London Development Agency. This operated out of the Greater London Authority at City Hall. However since the Localism Act, the LDA was abolished and strategic planning now sits solely with the Mayor's Office and the 33 authorities (32 boroughs and the City of London) work with city hall on strategic planning issues.<sup>434</sup> However, with the abolition of an arms-length organisation, it could be said that in fact power over urban design and planning is more concentrated with a smaller body of people and therefore less open to scrutiny.

As said previously the NPPF is not a plan for a particular area but national guidance for planning at the municipal level. As most Local Authorities' plans are therefore subject to the NPPF, London is in a unique position, it being the only region in England to have regional strategic power since the abolition of the Regional Development Authorities in other areas.<sup>435</sup> Despite the LDA's abolition, Cambridge-based Peter Studdert, an influential planner and chair of the LLDC design committee, remarked that London still has more strategic planning than other parts of England and that it is relatively well served.<sup>436</sup>

The London Plan therefore acts as both a regional and metropolitan tier guide, balancing national priorities with local ones. In conjunction with balancing the social, environmental and economic, the

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<sup>434</sup> Interview with Colin Wilson, Senior Planner, Greater London Authority, April 2015

<sup>435</sup> Planning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is now devolved.

<sup>436</sup> Interview with Peter Studdert, Planner, January 2015

role of planning, argued Studdert is also an attempt to balance regional, structural and general issues with the specifics of the local plan. Being a balancing power therefore, the London Plan recognises London as a city of national importance, but also attempts to manage its borough's needs, without undermining local autonomy. In reality, though, London has always faced internal political wrangling between the City Hall and the Boroughs, most notably in the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher abolished London County Council, many argue due to its radicalism under Ken Livingstone. Issues also arose when in 1965 London expanded to absorb surrounding counties in Greater London, for example, in the abolition of Middlesex.<sup>437</sup>

While setting out the general plan for Greater London, the plan also has an exceptional section regarding the development of the Olympic Park at Stratford. East London is considered a strategic growth area in London over the next 30 years and given the Olympics was also a National event, it is also of national importance. Given the sustainability aims of the Legacy, we must look to both sections of the London Plan which deal with the Legacy and that deal with sustainability more generally. The strategic aim of the Legacy from the perspective of the Plan are as follows:

*The London Legacy Development Corporation is carrying forward and refining the Mayor's original proposals through a local plan After the Games, it will be vital to make the most of the legacy they leave behind. This presents a unique opportunity to secure and accelerate the delivery of many elements of the Mayor's strategies, and for this reason it is the Mayor's highest regeneration priority for this period. The unique status of east London, and the recognition arising from association with the Games, is being will be used to effect a positive, sustainable and fully accessible economic, social and environmental transformation for one of the most diverse - yet deprived - parts of London.*<sup>438</sup>

And later in the document

*A city that meets the challenges of economic and population growth in ways that ensure a sustainable, good and improving quality of life and sufficient high quality homes and neighbourhoods for all Londoners and help tackle the huge issue of deprivation and inequality among Londoners, including inequality in health outcomes*<sup>439</sup>

The overall tone of the plan with respect to sustainable urbanism emphasises a more social aspect of sustainability with a technical knowledge of sustainable design. Like the NPPF its definition of sustainable development is on tripartite model. As such, it aims to balance the social, the economic and the environmental. In places it hints that there will be growth in the environmental sectors of the

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<sup>437</sup> Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

<sup>438</sup> GLA, *The London Plan*, 2011, p. 28.

<sup>439</sup> GLA, p. 32.

economy to help the problems of climate change and that London's unique clustering of institutions, knowledge and resources will be useful here. So it is actively acknowledging its unique strength in bringing together spaces for the emerging technology sector, and those sectors such as the creative industries that are often more aware of their environmental footprints, such as architecture and design. This overall tone of sustainable economic growth, with socially just aims is how we would sum up the entire document.

There is a threat however, that the post-political overtones of the ODA (Olympic Development Authority) affect the delivery of this position on urban sustainability issues. The way in which the community of the Carpenters Estate have been treated would certainly allude to the so-called consensus building and 'getting on with it' approach to delivery.<sup>440</sup>

*The Mayor intends to take a new, more consensual approach to planning for London growth (growth added in 2014 document), working with all the agencies and organisations (whether in the private, public or voluntary and community sectors) involved in the capital and in neighbouring regions (the East and South-East of England). This will focus more on delivery of agreed and shared objectives, less on process or structure. It will be based on a clear recognition of the need to plan for all parts of London, and all those who live, work, study or visit here and the need for engagement, involvement and consultation on all sides. It will seek to unblock the barriers to the development London needs, while ensuring this is planned for properly and supported by the infrastructure it requires to succeed<sup>441</sup>*

In terms of process then, the top-down nature of planning and pro-development rhetoric found in the NPPF can also be read here. It seems that development should be sped through the planning system without delay.

Chapter five here adopts a technical approach to sustainability policies, focusing on items such as sustainable drainage and green roof provision. Like Chapter two of the plan, this chapter is structured so that a contextual narrative is the basis of the chapter, with specific policies throughout. Thus, the coherent vision for London's policies comes near the beginning of the chapter and is as follows

*A city that becomes a world leader in improving the environment locally and globally, taking the lead in tackling climate change, reducing pollution, developing a low carbon economy and consuming fewer resources and using them more effectively.<sup>442</sup>*

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<sup>440</sup> UEL conference; Raco, 'Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012'.

<sup>441</sup> GLA, p. 27.

<sup>442</sup> GLA, p. 32.

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This is consistent with the London Plan as a whole, recognising that London as a world city has to balance local and global issues. Here, it specifically raises the issue of resource consumption which was not mentioned in the NPPF. The chapter also provides strong evidence for climate change adaptation, highlighting a general and overall concern with global environmental change.

Policies 5.1 and 5.2 are related, the former committing London to a CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction to 60% below 1990 levels by 2025. This is to be led by the GLA but carried about by London's constituent boroughs. Policy 5.2 addresses how this will be carried out through planning decisions. Development should minimise carbon emissions following a hierarchy in which the first (easiest) step is to use less energy, followed by energy efficiency when it is supplying energy, and lastly and most radically that it should use only renewable energy.<sup>443</sup>

This is then followed by a break-down of the future percentages of buildings that will be zero carbon in coming years, and should conform to National Building regulation standards in this regard. Following this are energy use guidelines; developments should have energy assessments carried out. Again, the remit here is on borough responsibility. Questions therefore remain about how London-wide targets for renewable energy, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be met given the nature of schemes such as district power or heating systems which may cross borough boundaries.

Policy 5.10 should be pointed out because it has a particularly important role to play in the context of the Greenway. It being firstly named a 'Greenway', but also on the ground as we will see in the next chapter as incorporating variegated forms of urban green space, we should bear in mind this policy which aims to increase the amount of greenspace in the urban realm. This is an example of where nature is viewed as instrumentally valuable, and not invaluable, and reifies the techno-centred approach. Despite this there exists a broader Greenway strategy for the entire metropolitan region in the form of the *All London Green Grid*.<sup>444</sup> This exists as a supplementary form of planning guidance and doesn't constitute planning policy directly but acts more as a guide specifically for London's network of green spaces. The Greenway is surprisingly poorly acknowledged in this document, although it is recognised as a cycle route.

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<sup>443</sup> Mayor of London, 'Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014', 2014.

<sup>444</sup> Mayor of London, *Green Infrastructure and Open Environments: The All London Green Grid - Supplementary Planning Guidance*.

<p><b>POLICY 5.10 URBAN GREENING</b></p> <p><b>Strategic</b></p> <p>A The Mayor will promote and support urban greening, such as new planting in the public realm (including streets, squares and plazas) and multifunctional green infrastructure, to contribute to the adaptation to, and reduction of, the effects of climate change.</p> <p>B The Mayor seeks to increase the amount of surface area greened in the Central Activities Zone by at least five per cent by 2030, and a further five per cent by 2050.</p> <p><b>Planning decisions</b></p> <p>C Development proposals should integrate green infrastructure from the beginning of the design process to contribute to urban greening, including the public realm. Elements that can contribute to this include tree planting, green roofs and walls, and soft landscaping. Major development proposals within the Central Activities Zone should demonstrate how green infrastructure has been incorporated.</p> <p><b>LDF preparation</b></p> <p>D Boroughs should identify areas where urban greening and green infrastructure can make a particular contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change, such as the urban heat island.</p>
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Figure 20. Policy 5.10 on urban greening in the London Plan.<sup>445</sup>

In summary the London Plan is, like the NPPF, techno-centred. However as it stresses the issues of climate change, and goes into technical detail about how to tackle it, including concrete future targets on things like zero-carbon homes, it is nearer towards the eco-centred side of the axis than the NPPF and thus it falls on the issue of environmental sustainability into the reform section. With regards to socio-economic equality it still rests on the current model of neo-liberal capitalism and continues the narrative of London being an engine of growth. However as it recognises the challenge of the housing crises, affordability and the need to improve skills and jobs, it doesn't rule out improvements to social mobility and wellbeing. Thus, although it is not radical enough to be considered transformative, given that the document as a whole recognises and attempts to deal with issues of inequality it is placed in the area of Reform. Here we see the scalar articulation of sustainability at the metropolitan scale; recognition of the role the metropolis plays in sustainability; a sustainability which favours continued economic growth, but an acknowledgement of the need for social justice.

### 4.3.2.3 *The LLDC Local Plan*

The London Legacy Development Corporation is an arms-length Mayoral Development Corporation which has been tasked with the delivery of the regeneration of the former Olympic park into a high-quality sustainable district in East London. The LLDC acts as a planning authority and has therefore produced one of the first Local Plans under the Localism Act.

<sup>445</sup> Source: GLA, p. 172.

The plan is unusual for a planning document as the entire remit of its genesis is ‘sustainability’. Many planning authorities have existed for sometimes centuries and sustainability appears somewhere within their plan as an issue to be dealt with alongside other planning priorities. Thus we must at the outset of the plan accept that this plan acknowledges sustainability as an issue. The role of the LLDC is laid out in the Local Plan:

*to promote and deliver physical, social, economic and environmental regeneration of the Olympic Park and its surrounding area, in particular by maximising the legacy of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, by securing high-quality sustainable development and investment, ensuring the long-term success of the facilities and assets within its direct control and supporting and promoting the aim of convergence*<sup>446</sup>

The aim of this body is therefore a tripartite notion of sustainability, but acknowledges both the policy context and temporal aspects of development. Nevertheless in this paragraph, the social and economic regeneration of the area is emphasised whereas the environmental qualities are not. For example ‘high-quality sustainable development and investment’, does not clarify any further definitions of the words ‘development and investment’, we must take it to mean an emphasis of the economic. Lastly, they wish to use the physical regeneration to promote the social aims of ‘convergence’. Convergence is the policy terminology for the socio-economic outcomes that Legacy should deliver. When people ask what Legacy means, this is the most definitive quantitative answer. Convergence will be reached when the 5 growth boroughs - those boroughs which circle the Olympic Park – will see their variables of multiple deprivation fall to reach the average of all of the 32 London boroughs by 2031. One glaring question, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, is how physical transformation over a small intense area can have socio-economic effects over 5 boroughs? Nevertheless, an emphasis on the socio-economic needs of East London means that an awareness has been raised of these issues, so like the London plan, sustainability is linked to a socio-economic reform. The question of scale then becomes blurry. Is it a transformation of Stratford or a transformation of East London?

As mentioned the LLDC exists implicitly to deliver a vision of a sustainable legacy. Yet even more striking is that given its intense powers of development over a large singular area of land, they have developed a very detailed sustainability plan, which is separate to the Local Plan. This, like the nature of the authority’s existence, is highly unique, and shows, relative to the state of the rest of the UK local authorities on the issue of sustainability just how variable the resources can be in planning for sustainability at the Local Authority level under Localism. However, for the purposes of this section of the analysis we must stick to the ‘column’ of planning which descends down from the NPPF, and the London Plan. In the Local Plan there is a clear sustainability policy

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<sup>446</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Local Plan 2015 - 2031*, 2015. p. 5.



*When considering development proposals, the Legacy Corporation will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan, the London Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.<sup>447</sup>*

There is a slight tension here between local and national policies. The NPPF, as mentioned above, defines a national level policy for Local Authorities, as if all the Local policies aggregated upwards provide the country with its national level objectives on climate change, overseen by the EU and UN. We can see clearly in this statement, the same language of hurried development, as if planning is an obstruction to development.

However it has been repeated in interviews,<sup>448</sup> that the design principles of the area will be guided carefully at every stage with the length of time over design being compared to the ‘great estates’ of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which also had similar powers – albeit aristocratic – to powerfully determine urban form, design and development. This stewardship of the land has led to extremely high-quality areas with the returns on investment over the centuries reaping huge return for the families who own the estates.

Thus if the LLDC is to be sustainable in also a temporal-economic sense, then it will be interesting to see how national policies of ‘development at any cost’ work out against the carefully managed design aspirations of the LLDC master plan.<sup>449</sup> In addition, when new residents begin to move-in to Chobham Manor (the first housing development), could they deliver, as is their right under the Localism Act, an alternative neighbourhood plan for the rest of the area’s development that would be a third party externality? For example, early residents could plan against the LLDC policy of coherent design, and also against the national desire to speed things up.

It is in the rhetoric of the *Great Estate* that we see the sustainability agenda of the LLDC become clearest. Although the *Your Sustainability Guide to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park* was mentioned prior, and that it is not an official planning document, it does spell out some of the guidelines for design and development in the area. In the document sustainable design covers 7 areas of sustainable infrastructure which cross-cut housing, cultural amenities, transport and public places:

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<sup>447</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Local Plan 2015 - 2031*, p. 16.

<sup>448</sup> Interview with Alex Savine, Head of Policy Planning, London Legacy Development Corporation

<sup>449</sup> Davis, ‘A Promised Future and the Open City: Issues of Anticipation in Olympic Legacy Designs’.

- *Energy conservation and carbon reduction*
- *Waste management*
- *Water management and conservation*
- *Biodiversity*
- *Facilitating sustainable lifestyles*
- *Transport and connectivity*
- *Materials selection*<sup>450</sup>

As the first plan of analysis here which works at the local scale, we also see how physical design is hoped to promote ‘sustainable lifestyles’. Mirroring earlier work by Rogers on the compact city, and evidence to show the benefits of living at higher densities, they write that ‘Residents will not have to travel by car for their daily needs – schools, playgrounds, shops, restaurants and health centres are within walking and cycling distance’<sup>451</sup>. The techno-centric approach to design is clear

*Homes are designed and oriented as much as possible to optimise access to sunlight and daylight. In many cases, this means homes have a double aspect.*

*All our homes will enable low-water use (averaging 105 litres per day per person, compared to a London average of 144 litres per day) and might be able to use non-potable water.*

*By 2020, home recycling and composting should be 60% (compared to a London average today of 32%). By 2025, no municipal waste should go directly to landfill ll.*

*All homes will be equipped with smart meters to allow residents to monitor their resource consumption.*

*Residents will be supported to continually reduce their energy usage.*<sup>452</sup>

As the new developments are in keeping with the latest technologies in sustainability, we must also ask ourselves who these houses will be for, given the housing crisis in London and the meaning of sustainability by the London Plan, to include a more socially-just city.

The need for London-wide affordable housing falls heavily on any new development project, and as shown above is an integral part of London’s vision of sustainability. The Mayor of London has said in

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<sup>450</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Park 2030*.

<sup>451</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Park 2030*. p. 8.

<sup>452</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Park 2030*. p. 25.

the past that he is committed to affordable housing<sup>453</sup> and the LLDC say that they will have across the whole of their remit ‘around a third’ of housing to be affordable.<sup>454</sup> However, it was recently announced that one of the new housing estates in the LLDC area will lose its percentage of houses which are affordable, falling from 40% to 30% to make way for ‘Olympicopolis’ a new cultural centre, backed by UCL and the V&A museum. In return, another neighbourhood, Chobham Manor will release affordable housing sooner, but said Johnson, Olympicopolis will create opportunities in the long run, as it will attract businesses and investors.<sup>455</sup> Thus we can see just how fragile a linear concept of development can be, when the Mayor can control much of the decisions made on such matters that serve so obviously a more strategic role for London than the people of Newham. It also shows that despite the claim for a sustainable Legacy for East London, what sustainable means, and by whom – the LLDC or the Mayor – could be anything from affordable housing, to a cultural centre. As shown previously this supports the central critique of contemporary sustainability as used in urban regeneration, which means everything and nothing at the same time.<sup>456</sup>

The LLDC is not merely a local level administration detached from national or London-wide policies. It was created by the Mayor of London and was created on the local level, geographically being squeezed between 4 surrounding boroughs. Nevertheless, it is treated as a planning authority with the same powers as the surrounding boroughs. Therefore it is a planning authority that works very close to the Mayor and the London Plan but, has within in it a diverse team of officials whose vision of London may differ from that of Boris Johnson. Rebutting Johnson for example, Kathryn Frith said that they do not want to create a pastiche of West London of the great estates but create a more vernacular terraced style that would fit in with the surrounding grain while maintaining the most technologically advanced forms of sustainable architecture.<sup>457</sup> Thus we must think about the London Plan’s vision of sustainability when we judge the LLDC Local Plan.

Standing independently, the Local Plan articulates a techno-centred approach to design but one which is more radical than any other authority in London. In essence it is a blue print of how cities in the future can regenerate an area into a zero carbon zone with minimal impact on the environment. It shows us exactly what, with clear measurable variables, materials and designs, a fully integrated sustainable neighbourhood should look like.

On socio-economic matters, despite the LLDC being of the London Plan, which historically has been more socially aware of the need for equality, jobs and housing, the LLDC plan is an off-shoot of a

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<sup>453</sup> Mayor of London, ‘Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014’.

<sup>454</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, ‘Sustainability | Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park’ <<http://queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/our-story/transforming-east-london/sustainability>> [accessed 11 June 2014].

<sup>455</sup> John Geoghegan, ‘Shifting Legacy: Why Olympic Park Plans Are Changing’, *Planning Resource*, 2015 <<http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1305473/shifting-legacy-why-olympic-park-plans-changing>> [accessed 25 August 2015].

<sup>456</sup> Swyngedouw, ‘Trouble with Nature - Ecology as the New Opium for the People’.

<sup>457</sup> Telephone interview with Kathryn Firth, Chief of Design, London Legacy Development Corporation, September 2014

Mayor who wants continued economic growth for London, and despite the rhetoric of Legacy, sees the regeneration of East London not as a way of transforming social problems, as per say the historical interventions in the East in the era of social housing, but as actively pursuing policies of gentrification. Although the housing in the LLDC area has been designated ‘affordable’ for around one third of its stock, current trends with things like Olympicopolis show that housing is not ring-fenced and neither are future promises. Indeed the crisis surrounding the Focus E15 mothers who had occupied social housing right on the edge of the LLDC area, show that the effects of concentrated development in one local authority, may increase pressure on surrounding land, especially if that land increases in value as a result. Despite Firth’s design vision of the LLDC area, the scheme will no doubt be of immense popularity and there have been reports of people queuing overnight to buy ‘second homes’ in the area, many are non-local people who want a place in London or have come from overseas looking for an investment. As such the area cannot be saved from the intense housing market which is London. The only way to prevent the area from not becoming an exclusive borough would be to increase the amount of affordable homes for middle-income groups and to bring back socialised housing. As yet, none of these look likely to happen.

The environmental vision which is techno-centric with an eco-centric future therefore places the plan in the sphere of ‘reform’. A socio-economic vision which despite good intentions, is so heavily linked to the London housing market and that housing for middle and low income families is low, places the plan on the boundary between reform and status quo, meaning that overall, the LLDC plan falls at a less egalitarian area of reform.

#### 4.3.2.4 *The Newham Core Strategy*<sup>458</sup>

The borough of Newham is situated in the East of London bordering the area of rapid change of the LLDC and every year the level of its population turnover, or ‘churn’, is around 25%.<sup>459</sup> It is one of Britain’s and London’s most deprived boroughs, and around 40% of the population do not speak English as a first language.<sup>460</sup> It has chronic health problems and around 50% of its children live in poverty.<sup>461</sup> ‘Resilience’ has become a key term for the council, arguing that in an age of unprecedented precariousness and vulnerability, its residents must first have resilience.<sup>462</sup> Newham Council has as of 2012 prepared a Strategy for the next 15 years. Simultaneously it has also had its budget slashed by Whitehall following the national budget cuts to Local Councils. Central government cuts from 2010-11 to 2014-5 amount to £298.28 per person per year, which is the fourth highest in the whole of

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<sup>458</sup> London Borough of Newham, ‘Newham 2027: Newham’s Local Plan - The Core Strategy’, 2012.

<sup>459</sup> Interview with Planning Officer, London Borough of Newham

<sup>460</sup> Aston-Mansfield, ‘Newham Key Statistics 2013’ (London, 2013).

<sup>461</sup> Aston-Mansfield.

<sup>462</sup> London Borough of Newham.

England and Wales, behind only Hackney, Knowsley (South Yorkshire) and Liverpool.<sup>463</sup> This context is important for Newham, as it will be shown as it seems unable to deliver a strong sustainability plan and has more pressing social issues to deal with for the present time.

*Newham 2027: Newham's Local Plan – The Core Strategy* is the closest document available which represents a spatial plan for the area. The document is typical of Local Authority plans in that it summarises the Borough's key statistics, has a foreword from the Mayor and is infused with the language of civic pride. While recognising its social challenges such as deprivation and social exclusion, it also recognises its strategic location in London and as part of the wider Legacy transformation

*Newham has a vital role in the continuing development of London as a World City. Our ambition is to develop sustainably, building on the area's heritage and location, and as the City spreads eastwards, to place the Borough at the heart of the economic growth of London. Newham will be a vibrant, dynamic, cohesive and ambitious Borough that maximises the opportunities for transformation and regeneration that come from the Olympic and Paralympic Games, excellent transport connections, a wealth of development land and wider sub-regional growth, and its young and diverse population.*<sup>464</sup>

Unlike the previous 3 documents, sustainability has not been defined anywhere in the document to the same detail. There is a section in the Strategy which highlights Newham's 'sustainable community strategy'. Rather than tackling climate change, 'sustainability' in this context is overwhelmingly about social issues. It is broken down into the following sub-headings: Safer Newham; Cleaner, Green Newham; Housing Newham; Active and Connected Newham; Young Newham; Ambitious Newham; and Healthy Newham. None of these categories emerge from a basis in the tripartite model of sustainability as found in the other planning documents. Thus the concept of sustainability is not fully thought through.

The problem of climate change is barely raised at all as an important one. Sustainability is distributed throughout the document for example 'sustainable communities', but its meaning is vague and imprecise. We must therefore find the specific section in the plan about tackling climate change. Thus climate change is seen as a separate issue and not holistically woven in, as per the LLDC Local Plan. 'Sustainability and Climate Change' are however core policies from pages 137 to 145. These are broken down into Climate Change, Energy, Flood Risk and Biodiversity.

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<sup>463</sup>Ami Sedghi and Patrick Butler, 'Local Council Cuts: Spending Power by Authority', *The Guardian*, 2015 <<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/dec/18/local-council-cuts-spending-power-by-authority>> [accessed 25 August 2015].

<sup>464</sup> London Borough of Newham. p. 31.

## Multi-scalar sustainable policy planning in East London

The majority of sub-statements for each policy are directly in line with the London plan, indeed the section of the London Plan quoted above, is also quoted in this document regarding increasing the stock of buildings which are zero. The only section of the Climate and Sustainability policy section which is unique to Newham is the Biodiversity strategy which shows the geographic location of key biodiversity areas, including the Jubilee Greenway. It is therefore interesting that it is in biodiversity where the Greenway gets recognition, and not for example on social and transport infrastructure.

In summary, the Newham vision of sustainable planning is not clearly defined. It is littered throughout the document in vague terms and where it is mentioned it defers to the London Plan's guidance. This is not necessarily a 'bad' thing. As we have been arguing, sustainability doesn't necessarily need to be made the level of the borough, but could benefit from strategic level authority. The problem is therefore not at the authority-level, but the vast discrepancy between the level of planning that the LLDC has, guided by the Mayor and seen as a strategic part of London. Newham, being on the edge of a borough that is so well equipped, and whose budget has been slashed has perhaps not the resources to enable it to prepare a vision of a zero carbon future, or even define what is meant by sustainability. However, as it refers to the London Plan on its sustainability policies, we can only judge it by the same standards of the London Plan. As such it is given the same position in our graph as the London Plan, but a greater awareness of social issues pertaining to the borough. This places it in the reform area field.

### 4.3.3 Plotting on the Hopwood graph

With the 4 policy documents now interpreted, which each of their environmental and socio-economic meanings of sustainable urbanism, we can place it the graph as follows.

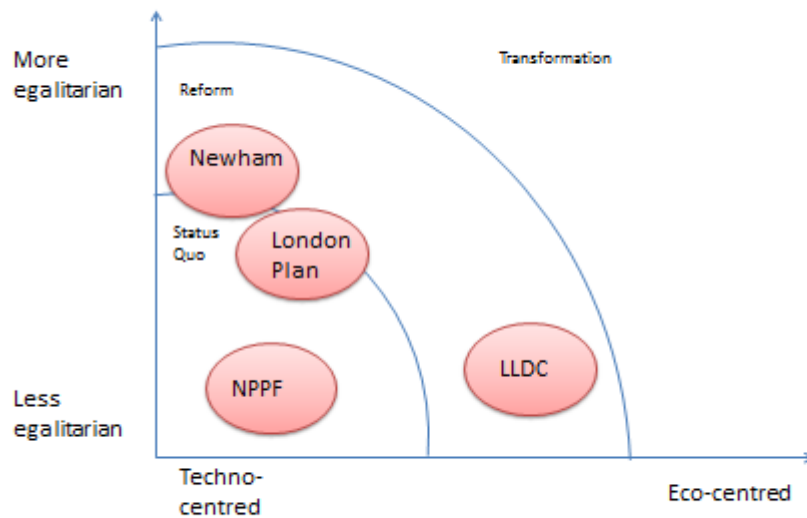


Figure 21. Plotting multi-scalar plans on the Hopwood graph.

If we apply a scalar understanding to this framework we find that local conceptions of sustainability are divergent between the LLDC and Newham Council. At the metropolitan level we find a ‘balancing act’ whereby the city attempts to push its techno-centred sustainability approach onto the boroughs, but with an awareness of the role of socio-economic equality on the back of economic growth. The National tier guidance is devoid of any real reform to socio-economic relations that may arise from a sustainable future, nor is sustainability given any real meaning despite bold claims at the beginning of the document.

### 4.4 Conclusion: strategic tensions

In this chapter we have reviewed the recent literature around urban planning in the UK and neo-liberalisation. We showed how this has been thought of in paradigms or waves, with the current incarnation being *roll-with-it* where planning is perhaps at its most de-regulated since the 1980s. We noticed too that the sustainability agenda had been central to planning, particularly around the idea of socially sustainable regeneration and the planning of sustainable communities. Both of these were implicated within scalar relationships.

In the second part of this chapter we attempted to look at how sustainability planning in East London appears in the planning documents at various scales, from the national, to the London Plan, to two local plans. In doing this we attempted to show how these plans represent different agendas based on their scalar articulations. We noted that the NPPF's notion of sustainability was centred around status quo growth, that London's was around housing and job creation, and the LLDC local plan and LBN diverged greatly particularly through their capacities to set out a vision in the first place. Thus each of these different priorities at different scales present conflicts or trade-offs in models of sustainability, when we consider them through the concept of scale.

We can also see as discussed in Chapter Two that planning policy doesn't necessarily form a hierarchical linear format down a chain of command. It is not a nested hierarchy but rather a more complex network of relations in which scale jumping takes place. Despite being neighbouring authorities, the LLDC gains much of its power and legitimacy through the Mayor of London, and in a sense this is an extension of Mayoral representation in the city. Newham on the other hand despite coming under the London Plan has had much of its funding cut by decisions made by national government.

We can also see that the boundaries of sustainable governance do not match the realities of social life in East London. The governance boundaries do not follow the complexity of life in the city. This is of course nothing new. But the Localism Act has intensified the divisions between Boroughs as Newham has had funding cuts while the LLDC continues to plan intensely on its border with no mediatory effect of a non-Mayoral body of co-ordination. The secondary effects of this may be that the value of the land surrounding the high quality LLDC will rise as developments want to locate there. We have already seen that Newham wishes to sell the Carpenters Estate based on its increased land value and demolish the social housing there.<sup>465</sup>

Thus the Mayor of London has the power to plan for sustainability across London, but this is an inherent politics of sustainability because it will surely put the needs of London first, rather than local

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<sup>465</sup> A. Chakraborty, 'Heroes of 2014: The Focus E15 Mothers', *The Guardian* <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/31/focus-e15-mothers-newham-council>> [accessed 30 July 2015].



needs. The fate of the upgrade of the Greenway highlights the scalar politics of sustainability as affected by the Localism Act, and what indeed sustainability actually means to the various planning authorities at play. While the LLDC is an urban regeneration corporation, through which a vision of sustainable urbanism is enacted, and where claims are made that it can bring Legacy to East London, the Greenway is almost a completely opposite opportunity, both in scale and our thinking on sustainability. Firstly, it is linear and has the potential connect the whole of East London, not just the LLDC area and secondly a new form of sustainability is open for debate. Adams and Sutherland's Greenway strategy,<sup>466</sup> as will be shown, is one that includes a strong element of community involvement in the immediate housing areas it borders, while the promotion of walking and cycling which would directly bring the statistics of poor health and inactivity down, from the position of the 'convergence' agenda. It too links directly into a growing Olympic Park, and would make non car-based commute from residents in Newham into the LLDC area far easier. Yet, through the National agenda of scrapping regional-tier organisations, the cutting of funding to Local councils, and a sustainability policy which for each tier of planning authority is not clearly defined and potentially contradictory, projects such the Greenway which must rely on a clear vision and partnerships at metropolitan and local levels will face difficulties in being implemented.

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<sup>466</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

## 5 East London and the 2012 Olympic legacy: socio-economic and physical transformations

### 5.1 Introduction

East London has long been a site of relative socio-economic deprivation in relation to other sub-regions of London. As such the area has been the focus of experimentation in urban redevelopment, renewal and regeneration from the late nineteenth century to the present.<sup>467</sup> Furthermore, strong cultural and social attitudes about East London have played into its transformations over the decades.<sup>468</sup> The London 2012 Olympic Games was to be used as a catalyst for wider regeneration of East London as a whole, known as the Olympic Legacy.<sup>469</sup> These came with a series of legacy promises to help target the area's socio-economic and environmental problems, and use performance indicators to demonstrate the outcomes of these policies.<sup>470</sup>

The area is beset by both socio-economic and physical challenges, mainly comprising of high levels of socio-economic exclusion as indicated in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011,<sup>471</sup> and the barriers created by layers of transport infrastructure and natural obstacles such as the Lea Valley.<sup>472</sup> In this chapter we introduce the main social and physical characteristics of the area which are relevant to the study of localism and sustainable urban development in the next chapter.

In section 5.2 we introduce the urban context within which our problem is set. We describe the inter-related issues of deprivation, urban morphology, social class and migration, and economic growth in East London. In section 5.3 we introduce the London 2012 Olympic Games and set out the relationship between the games and London's ongoing transformation, living through the urban changes brought by the games, the Olympic legacy and its promises. The chapter concludes by arguing that the Greenway upgrade provides a key missed opportunity and link for the projected eastward growth of London's population and economy. If this growth is to happen, it is vital that sustainable development is considered.

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<sup>467</sup> Peter Ackroyd, 'The Stinking Pile', in *London: The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 553–60; Hall, 'The City of Dreadful Night'.

<sup>468</sup> Newland.

<sup>469</sup> John Gold and Margaret Gold, *Olympic Cities: City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896 - 2016* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>470</sup> Mayor of London, *Convergence Framework and Action Plan 2011 - 2015*, 2011.

<sup>471</sup> HM Government, 'English Indices of Deprivation 2015 - Summaries at Local Authority Level - Datasets' <<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015-summaries-at-local-authority-level>> [accessed 2 January 2017].

<sup>472</sup> Design for London.

## 5.2 The urban context

### 5.2.1 Multiple deprivation

East London today is the most deprived of all the sub-regions in the map above. Deprivation in East London has justified the establishment of the Growth Boroughs, which are the reporting boroughs for the key performance indicators of the legacy promises. Below we set out the relative levels of deprivation in East London from the Office of National Statistics's dataset *English Indices of Deprivation 2015 - Summaries at Local Authority Level*.<sup>473</sup>

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a composite index of social statistics of small areas known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which areas are on the scale of neighbourhoods. The statistics are gathered and placed into categories and weighted accordingly to create the overall Index of Deprivation:

- Income Deprivation (22.5%)
- Employment Deprivation (22.5%)
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (13.5%)
- Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%)
- Crime (9.3%)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%)
- Living Environment Deprivation (9.3%)

The Index of Multiple Deprivation can be expressed as either a ranking or an absolute score. Local Authorities can be measured against the IMD by aggregating their LSOAs. Therefore, although LSOAs can be ranked nationally, comparisons between local authorities can also be made from aggregating a local authority's LSOAs. Below is the ranked order of London's Boroughs according to two rankings with the Growth Boroughs underlined.

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<sup>473</sup> HM Government.

## East London and the 2012 Olympic legacy: socio-economic and physical transformations

**Table 3: Rankings of London Boroughs' *Index of Multiple Deprivation* national ranking<sup>474</sup>**

<b>Local Authority District name (2013)</b>	<b>IMD - Rank of proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally</b>	<b>Local Authority District name (2013)</b>	<b>IMD - Rank of average rank</b>
<u>Tower Hamlets</u>	24	<u>Hackney</u>	2
Haringey	44	<u>Barking and Dagenham</u>	3
<u>Hackney</u>	49	<u>Tower Hamlets</u>	6
Islington	61	<u>Newham</u>	8
Westminster	64	Islington	13
Enfield	82	<u>Waltham Forest</u>	15
Kensington and Chelsea	84	Haringey	21
<u>Waltham Forest</u>	89	Lambeth	22
Brent	100	Southwark	23
<u>Newham</u>	<u>103</u>	Lewisham	26
Lambeth	113	Brent	39
Hammersmith and Fulham	117	Westminster	43
Camden	131	<u>Greenwich</u>	50
Southwark	135	Enfield	53
Lewisham	136	Camden	69
<u>Barking and Dagenham</u>	137	Hammersmith and Fulham	76
Ealing	143	Hounslow	86

<sup>474</sup> HM Government.

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Bromley	154	Ealing	87
Croydon	158	Croydon	91
<u>Greenwich</u>	173	Kensington and Chelsea	99
Hounslow	182	Redbridge	119
Barnet	189	Wandsworth	147
Sutton	194	Hillingdon	153
Havering	195	Barnet	157
Redbridge	196	Havering	166
Wandsworth	197	Bexley	195
City of London	200	Merton	212
Bexley	200	Harrow	213
Harrow	200	Sutton	217
Hillingdon	200	Bromley	220
Kingston upon Thames	200	City of London	226
Merton	200	Kingston upon Thames	278
Richmond upon Thames	200	Richmond upon Thames	296

The two columns above provide a cursory understanding of multiple deprivation at the borough level in London. Neither columns show absolute values, but rather the ranked order of boroughs at a national level. We have selected **IMD - Rank of proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally** and **IMD - Rank of average rank**. The former shows us a ranking of where that borough sits nationally in a ranked order, when we consider what proportion of all of its LSOAs fall into the 10% most deprived at the national level. This allows to us to factor in the possibility of overlooking inequalities within a borough. The latter shows us the average ranking at the national level of each LSOA in each borough and then aggregates this average for each borough. The boroughs are then ranked based on this average at the national level.

## East London and the 2012 Olympic legacy: socio-economic and physical transformations

We have selected only London boroughs and the data shows where they sit in the national ranking.

The first point to note is that 5 of the 6 most deprived in **the rank of average rank** in Greater London are the Olympic Growth boroughs and all are in East London. The one other Growth Borough, Greenwich, comes 13<sup>th</sup>. This means that at the scale of the local authority, East London boroughs are the most deprived compared to boroughs in Central, West, North and South London.

A more complex picture emerges when we look at the rank of proportion of **LSOAs in the most deprived 10% nationally**. As stated above, this allows us to look at pockets of deprivation that are overlooked by local authority averages. Therefore we see that only 4 out of 6 Growth Boroughs appear in the London top 10, and some are outranked by boroughs not normally associated with poverty. For example with this measure, we find that Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea have more LSOAs which are in the 10% most deprived LSOAs than Newham, Waltham Forest, Barking and Dagenham. This is likely to reflect the nature of London's housing geography, whereby social housing estates still exist in the wealthiest boroughs.

This comparison confirms however that on average East London boroughs are more deprived than boroughs in other sub-regions of London, but that individual pockets of deprivation may not be as extreme as those found in more affluent boroughs.

## East London and the 2012 Olympic legacy: socio-economic and physical transformations

We can also therefore look at the spatial characteristics of poverty in East London using online GIS software and web-sites developed by the Office for National Statistics and the Department for Communities and Local Government. This also shows data at the LSOA level and so we can see in more detail where deprivation is present around our case study site in particular. The map below from the London Plan shows deprivation across all of London's LSOAs. We can clearly see a higher concentration of LSOAs within the 20% most deprived LSOAs in East London than in other parts of the city.

**Map 2.1 Sub-regions**



**Figure 22. Sub-regions in the London Plan.<sup>475</sup>**

<sup>475</sup> Mayor of London, 'Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014', p. 48.

## East London and the 2012 Olympic legacy: socio-economic and physical transformations

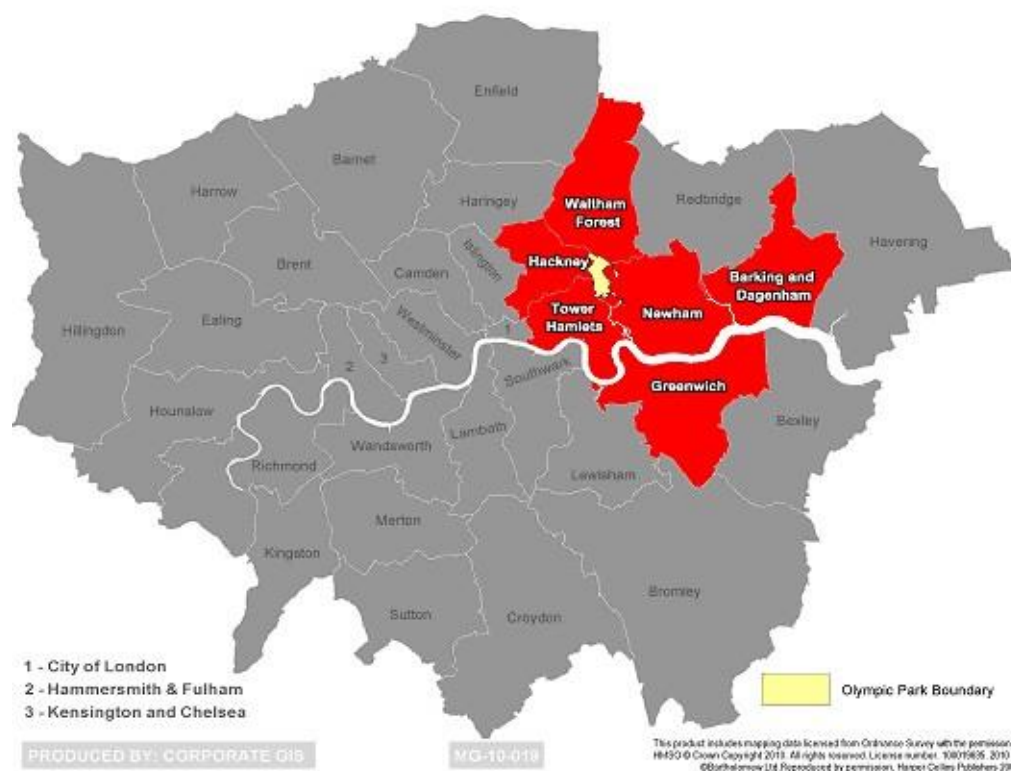


Figure 23. The growth boroughs in the London Plan.<sup>476</sup>

<sup>476</sup> Mayor of London, *Convergence Framework and Action Plan 2011 - 2015*, p. 3.



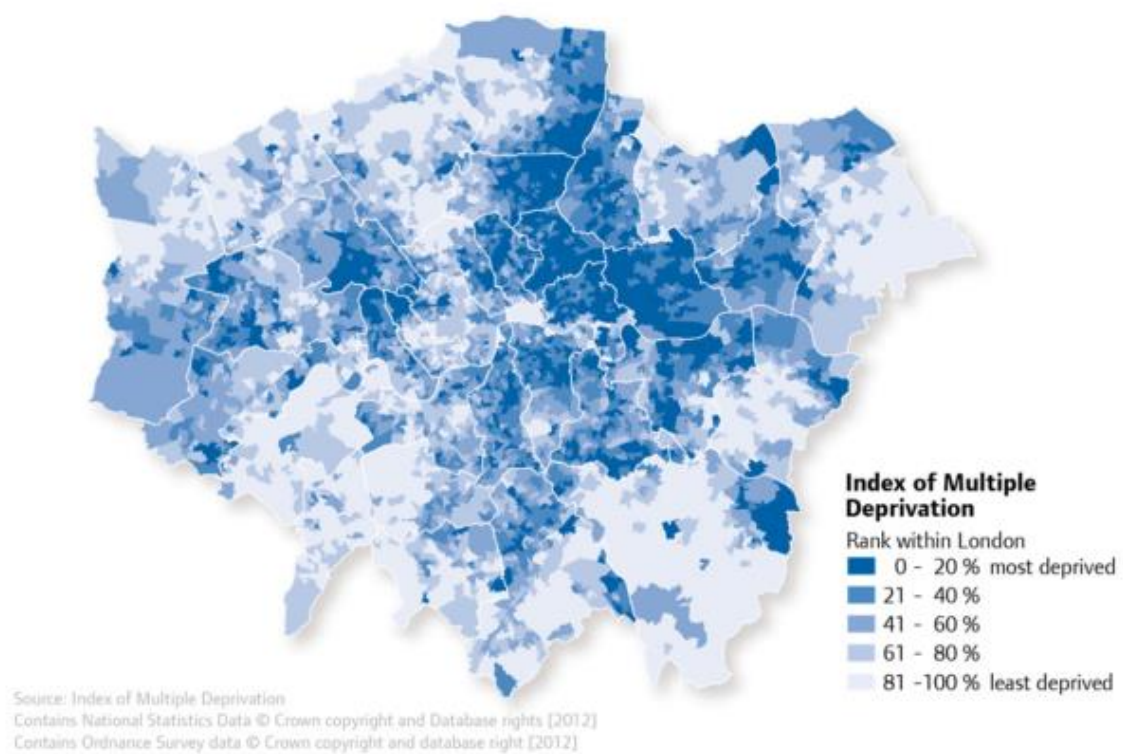


Figure 24. Index of Multiple Deprivation in the London Plan.<sup>477</sup>

<sup>477</sup> Mayor of London, 'Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014', p. 25.

### 5.2.2 Urban morphology

The use of urban environmental improvements as an attempt to regenerate east London has historical precedent. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the East End (as described, slightly different to meaning of “East London”), became famously synonymous with urban poverty and squalor.<sup>478</sup> Although many other parts of London suffered similar social and environmental problems from rapid urbanisation with no social safety net, overcrowding and low wages,<sup>479</sup> it is arguably the city’s east in which the broader moral panics of the nation became crystallised. Cohen writes that “no area of Britain has been more written about, more exploited as a source and site for the projection of public anxieties about the proletarian combination of sexual promiscuity, the state of the nation or degeneration of the race”.<sup>480</sup>

The responses to urban squalor of the East End were mainly expressed through housing which in their incremental nature have had a marked effect on the urban morphology of the area. In his analyses of rookeries, Dominic Severs notes the middle-class fear of East End closes and rookeries, and that architects sought to demolish and open up the rookeries and turn them into streets.<sup>481</sup> In such rookeries, it was often found that overcrowding had led to the spread of diseases but also to moral degradation from prostitution, child neglect and even sexual abuse and incest.<sup>482</sup> One late Victorian response in London was the demolition of rookeries, replacing them with high-quality tenements with indoor bathrooms, balconies, and wide streets between blocks, which often had courtyards to let in light. The first of these was the Boundary Estate scheme, completed in 1900. The scale of this project was relatively large for the time covering several blocks. However, like many regeneration schemes today, it was noted at the time that many of the original inhabitants were forced out and moved further to the east to places such as Stepney. The new boundary imposed rules around social behaviour and alcohol consumption and housed more ‘respectable’ members of the working classes.<sup>483</sup>

Fifty years later, the East End was still a site for experimentation in urban reform. After the Second World War, redevelopment schemes became grander, and their materials and styles had shifted from Arts and Craft brick to cheaper and fashionable concrete. Places such as Stepney Green were seen as entire neighbourhoods in need of ‘comprehensive redevelopment’.<sup>484</sup> The old terraces and streets were demolished and replaced with a new model community, with blocks of flats placed amongst green space at some distance to each other, and community facilities such as primary schools, surgeries and

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<sup>478</sup> Ackroyd; Hall, ‘The City of Dreadful Night’.

<sup>479</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Verso, 2013).

<sup>480</sup> Cohen, P. (1996: 173) in Newland.

<sup>481</sup> Dominic Severs, ‘Rookeries and No-Go Estates: St. Giles and Broadwater Farm, or Middle-Class Fear of “non-Street” Housing’, *The Journal of Architecture*, 15.4 (2010), 449–97

<sup>482</sup> Robin Evans.

<sup>483</sup> T.F.T. Baker, ‘Bethnal Green: Building and Social Conditions from 1876 to 1914’, in *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 11, Stepney, Bethnal Green.*, ed. by T.F.T. Baker (London: Victoria County History, 1998), pp. 126–32.

<sup>484</sup> Ralph Keene, *Proud City: A Plan for London* (UK, 1946) <<http://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b6a3bd643>> [accessed 15 February 2014].

shopping parades at the centre of the community. Comprehensive redevelopment schemes at the neighbourhood scale were built all over east London. This was partly to do with the destruction of housing during the German bombing of the East End in particular but also due to an ideological and cultural mood that sought to use this opportunity to re-shape the future of urban London and to consign the squalor of the previous decades to history forever.<sup>485</sup>

Despite the widespread deployment of these housing projects which sought to improve people's lives, at the beginning of the Olympic Games in 2012, London's eastern boroughs still contained some of the highest levels of deprivation in the UK as we saw above. Today, the borough of Newham which contains Stratford and other local centres such as Plaistow, shows remnants of these housing projects. As it was the inner boroughs which had the original Victorian and Edwardian redevelopments, the outer borough of Newham has more of the post-war redevelopments in the modernist style. One of these, Ronan Point, was made famous in 1968 when an entire section of a tower block collapsed after a resident's electric fuse blew up while using the kettle.<sup>486</sup>

The continual redevelopment of small pockets of east London's urban area, in combination with its difficult infrastructures has meant that, in contrast to west London, it remains a part of the city that is physically fragmented. Many of the redevelopment areas were built as neighbourhood units with a hard neighbourhood boundary, preventing easy accessibility to the wider urban area. A strong example of this is Carpenters Estate which is wedged between railway lines which separate it from the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) to the east and west, and a major road which acts as a barrier to the south. Its street layout reflects a closed system. Its main road is circular in connecting the various housing units and community facilities, but only has three exits to the wider urban grain.

These types of development are found throughout the borough of Newham and their effects on accessibility are also compounded by infrastructural challenges. Stratford is a town of tension between sites which are connected to international flows of people and commerce, juxtaposed right next to sites which are inward facing, isolated and cut off, or as what Tschumi has called "scalar juxtaposition".<sup>487</sup> This overall topography has come about by the railway lines, the Northern Outfall Sewer, the canals, the shopping redevelopments, the roads and the housing estates.

The Northern Outfall sewer was constructed as part of a London-wide scheme to improve sanitation in the city, following the Great Stink in the 1850s.<sup>488</sup> This scheme brings sewage from the central core of the urban area out to the Thames Estuary at Beckton via Stratford. This was built after the railways to the north but was a determining factor in shaping the residential blocks and patterns of terraced

<sup>485</sup> Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>486</sup> BBC, 'On this day, 1968: Three Die as Tower Block Collapses', 2003

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/16/newsid\\_2514000/2514277.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/16/newsid_2514000/2514277.stm)> [accessed 3 January 2017].

<sup>487</sup> Graham and Marvin. p. 115.

<sup>488</sup> Halliday.

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housing in Newham which back on to it. In the case of railway lines and certainly in the case of the Greenway, access points to cross these barriers can be far apart. Thus, the sites bordering these barriers tend to have a low level of accessibility as was confirmed by observation and as described in the *Greenway Vision Study*.<sup>489</sup> This results in quiet spaces and natural forms for edge developments such as retail parks, industrial estates, parks, cemeteries and other spaces that make use of enclaves and dead-ends.

Other infrastructures also create physical problems of access and mobility across the area. Most major routes out from central London are radial, and there are few ways to transect Newham which bisect the dominant transport routes. The nexus of transport at Stratford town is a major local hub. This could be better accessed by the wider area of Newham if more direct routes existed, which would require something which linked the dominant southwest-northeast routes with a southeast-northwest one. This is one of the possible benefits of an upgraded Greenway along the Northern Outfall Sewer and indeed a link between the Greenway and Stratford town was proposed as part of the Adams and Sutherland upgrade.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

<sup>490</sup> Adams and Sutherland.



Figure 25. An aerial view of Carpenters Estate..<sup>491</sup>

<sup>491</sup> Source: Google Maps, 2016.



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Figure 26. An aerial view of a section of the Jubilee Greenway.<sup>492</sup>

The intensification of the isolation of Carpenters Estate, reflects the ‘local by-pass’ effect Graham and Marvin articulate in infrastructure development strategies since the collapse of the unifying ideal from the 1970s onwards.<sup>493</sup> The Olympic Park and the adjoining Westfield Mall both constitute a form of integration that has already been tried in East London. In a similar fashion of governance, the London Docklands Development Corporation was established in 1981 as a form of land assembly, with planning powers and the right to enter into contracts with developers.<sup>494</sup> The area of the London Docklands also had tax reductions. This form of governance is strikingly similar to the London Legacy Development Corporation we see today. In addition, if we are to look at the condition of urban infrastructures in the Docklands today and in Stratford there are some key similarities. The ‘local by-pass’, occurs when local buildings and actors in a particular site or place, are situated close or adjacent to a line of communication such as road or rail service, which does not connect to that place, but to a scalar network further up the transport hierarchy. In the case of the Carpenters Estate, the community is severed by such an infrastructure. This is also evident in parts of the Isle of Dogs and whereby the district of Poplar, situated to the north of East India dock Road is physically cut-off by road and rail connections to its south, even though many low-paid service workers in the Isle of Dogs, live in Poplar. Colomb has described such arrangements in London as “physically proximate

<sup>492</sup> Source: Google Maps, 2016.

<sup>493</sup> Graham and Marvin.

<sup>494</sup> Carmona, ‘The Isle of Dogs : Four Development Waves, Five Planning Models, Twelve Plans, Thirty-Five Years, and a Renaissance . . . of Sorts’.

but institutionally estranged... This can lead to actual conflicts over the use of green, cultural, social or retail spaces and to feelings of alienation”.<sup>495</sup> Using a similar understanding of isolation, researchers at Space Syntax attempted to explain the 2011 riots, and concluded that the proximity of isolated council estates, and their distance to high streets was a large factor in the determining the outbreak of rioting in 2011.<sup>496</sup>

### 5.2.3 Social class and cultural constructions of East London

There has been thorough engagement in the field of geography with the idea that entire geographic regions or areas can be reduced to a variety of imaginative discourses.<sup>497</sup> Imagined Geographies are part of our everyday discussion of places and spaces ranging from a neighbouring town or city, to a foreign country. Such imaginations are deployed through everyday speech but may also be reinforced formally in image, film, map and text. Drawing on Edward Said’s *Orientalism* Driver for example shows how histories of Geographical knowledge imagined and solidified Imperial visions and realities from Europeans about their colonies, which were used to justify further development and intervention.<sup>498</sup>

In the context of urban reform, it has been argued by some that this *Orientalism* is not too dissimilar to that of the domestic working-classes,<sup>499</sup> especially in the role that housing was meant to play in ‘improving’ the lives of the people for them to achieve an idealised vision of habitation and domesticity.<sup>500</sup> In the maritime Imperial city of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we see a form of imaginative geography by the ruling elite of west London both towards the Empire, and towards the masses of the people in the East End (some of whom ironically were non-European by way of centuries of trade).<sup>501</sup>

In Booth’s maps of London we see how empirical evidence can often be laced with cultural and social prejudice. In this case, the very real geographies or streets and dwellings, were implicated with an analysis of social class, which were in the case of the lower classes, tinged with an imagined geography of criminality.<sup>502</sup> How accurate could it have been for example that all of the lower classes could have been “semi-criminal” and “vicious”? In line with popular thinking of the time, the poor were either “deserving” or “undeserving”, in that the former group were moral and well-behaved, and

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<sup>495</sup> Colomb, p. 10.

<sup>496</sup> Space Syntax, ‘London Riots’ <<http://www.spacesyntax.com/project/2011-london-riots/>> [accessed 15 February 2014].

<sup>497</sup> Felix Driver and Martins Luciana, *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>498</sup> Paul J Cloke, Phil Crang and Mark Goodwin, *Introducing Human Geographies* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>499</sup> Neil Gray and Gerry Mooney, “Glasgow’s New Urban Frontier: ‘Civilising’ the Population of ‘Glasgow East,’” *City*, 15 (2011).

<sup>500</sup> Severs.

<sup>501</sup> Newland.

<sup>502</sup> Robin Evans.

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the latter were permanently entrenched in a culture of poverty. They were feckless because they were poor and they were poor because they were feckless.<sup>503</sup> More pertinently, London's East End has not been imagined as a set of individuals or groups of lower class criminals, but as the entire area itself as a homogenous space of fear, darkness and vice.<sup>504</sup>

It is striking that after a century of urban interventions in East London, similar spatial patterns of relative poverty are still evident in East London, considering the amount of architectural and urban reform. East London has retained its socio-economic position of relative poverty to the west. The origins of this east-west relationship can be said to also begin with a boundary: that of the Roman London Wall, along which future development would be influenced. Notably, in the mediaeval period, the walls were very similar to the Roman layout of the City and thus Bishopsgate became the City's eastern boundary. The re-construction of a Westminster Abbey by Henry III and the siting of the Royal Palaces and Parliament nearby in coming centuries, established the West End as the centre of power, while the eastern gates began to symbolise both exclusion from the city but also the 'dirty' trades with which the city relied upon (from manufactures to prostitution).<sup>505</sup> In essence, the city could not be the city, without its excluded *Other* on the east side of the 'Bishops Gate'.

The entrenchment of an East End as a real and imagined space began with the settlements east of Bishopsgate which housed populations and activities that were deemed unworthy to be associated with the Cities of London and Westminster. Jews settled in the East End from here from as early as the 1300s as they were not allowed to reside in the City of London, yet were of course vital to its wealth, as lenders of money.<sup>506</sup> Several centuries later many arrived in the East End again from Eastern Europe and the Russian Empire.

Despite an east-west distinction emerging in late mediaeval times, it has been argued most strongly that the development of a binary imagination of East and West really did not begin to accelerate until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>507</sup> By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was a central trope describing the socio-geographical differences within London.<sup>508</sup> There were many architectural developments which contributed to this intensification of difference. Firstly the development of comprehensive paving allowed for one to be able to walk with ease, without walking through dirt, and in a straight line. The London Paving and Lighting Acts of 1766, enforced paving, draining and general ease of movement for pedestrians on the streets of the West End.<sup>509</sup> This gradually increased the use of street by

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<sup>503</sup> Jones.

<sup>504</sup> Ackroyd.

<sup>505</sup> E. Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* (London: Virago Press, 1991).

<sup>506</sup> Ackroyd.

<sup>507</sup> Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Wilson.

<sup>508</sup> Newland.

<sup>509</sup> Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure*; Wilson.



pedestrians for strolling, and they became attractive places to view and be seen in.<sup>510</sup> The ability to walk, also allowed one to affirm one's position in this new public arena of late 18<sup>th</sup> century London. This freedom of movement resonated with constructions of one's 'place' in urban space. Mainly white bourgeois and aristocratic men had this freedom and were able to perform their role as Gentlemen both in their private parlours into which people could view them, or as *flâneurs* in the street.<sup>511</sup> As such, class distinctions were inextricably linked to the accessibility afforded by the physical improvements to the public realm in west London. All of these changes in urban design could be summed up in John Nash's Regent Street which was developed around the 1820s and redeveloped again later in the century. Thus, improvements in paving and lighting, more ordered urban design, and the ease with which people could publicly demonstrate their identity, contributed strongly to the West End as a space of civility, bourgeois social life, safety and light.<sup>512</sup>

The contrast in the infrastructural intervention between east and west until the advent of 20th century housing redevelopments, was vast. There were no grand avenues, no improvements and no long-straight lines in the East End in the times of John Nash. In contrast to the West End of the early 19th century, the East End comprised mainly narrow streets, with poor sanitation, paving and lighting in relation to the west of the city. It had a dense population – but also a diverse one with it being close to one of the world's largest ports – who were living often in environments of overcrowding, squalor and subsequent disease.<sup>513</sup> The interplay between the physical and social, has thus meant that poor urban realm in east London fed into wider cultural notions of its social and cultural characteristics.

Although the East End did have very real problems, its image was also compounded by popular narratives from west-enders.<sup>514</sup> In his book *The Cultural Construction of London's East end*, Paul Newland argues that through an analysis of cultural artefact – novels, journals and later, film – we can argue that how the east is presented says more about the anxieties of the middle classes in Britain in the 20th century, both towards the urban poor and towards colonial subjects. Newland writes that the identity of East London has been presented as “ill-favoured, stigmatised social space; as the antithesis of order, civility and decorum – associated with evil, darkness, primitiveness and the uncivilised”.<sup>515</sup>

Indeed Newland argues that the development of London in the 19th century along its East-West axis went together with new ideas about social class. Yet it was the middle-classes in the 19th century who were both the conduits for prejudice but also well-meaning reform in form of the Fabians.<sup>516</sup> The geographic dimension to London's class system began to harden earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when

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<sup>510</sup> Wilson.

<sup>511</sup> Wilson.

<sup>512</sup> Newland.

<sup>513</sup> Ackroyd; Robin Evans.

<sup>514</sup> Newland.

<sup>515</sup> Newland, p.19

<sup>516</sup> Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006).

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gentlemen would take ‘rambles’ in the East End. Wilson has argued that the gentlemen of respectable upper classes would seek their inner sexual desires amongst the ‘seedy’ darkness of the East end, where they were both anonymous and also given service and account of their status.<sup>517</sup> “Slumming it”, as it would later be known in the 20th century, became a past-time for many young men seeking thrills outside of their claustrophobic West End lives. Many engaged in drinking and used prostitutes of both sexes, and non-whites.<sup>518</sup> Practices like these were aided, as we set out above, by the urban environment. It was easy for men to loose themselves and be sexually anonymous in the darker and narrower streets of the East End.

Issues of class and urban design are still with us today in the planning of the QEOP. Surrounding the discussion of the development of the QEOP there has of course been a variety of critiques. One of these has been around the extent to which the way in which the QEOP is both governed and designed, represents an insertion of west London typography into the Lea Valley, and with it, its associated social class demographics.<sup>519</sup> This accusation of an alien insertion stems from the ways in which governance and design intersect. Firstly, the governance arrangements of the QEOP are such that it is an unelected body with the ability to create a local plan and design codes. It has been noted by academics and those working at the LLDC, that the LLDC’s role is to be a custodian or a steward of the land over a long-period of time. This is similar to the ‘great estates’ of London in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century which helped to form the ordered typology of west London and its class identity we set out above. The great estates – the Fitzroys, the Grosvenors, and the Cadogans among others – are land holdings by aristocrats that London grew into.<sup>520</sup> As such, when London developed into their lands they were able to guide and control the design and planning of these areas resulting in the high quality public realm we see here today.<sup>521</sup> Thus because of the similarity in governance allowing the shaping of urban design, the LLDC has been described as a ‘great estate’.<sup>522</sup>

This was rebutted strongly however by Kathryn Firth, Chief of Design at the LLDC.<sup>523</sup> She argued that this was a “Boris idea” (Boris Johnson, being the Mayor at the time), and a rendering of the white townhouses overlooking the Olympic Park, suggesting an urban environment akin to Regents Park, had been wrongly circulated. Instead Kathryn argued that the future of the LLDC would be in keeping with what Londoners could relate to. This would be the use of brick and a terraced typology with some townhouses and mews dwellings. This she argued was explicitly linked to the area’s affordable

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<sup>517</sup> Wilson.

<sup>518</sup> Newland.

<sup>519</sup> Lecture by Jonathan Rose, Principle of Design and Planning at AECOM. Delivered at University of Cambridge Department of Architecture, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

<sup>520</sup> Webber and Burrows.

<sup>521</sup> Webber and Burrows.

<sup>522</sup> Andrew Smith, ‘From Green Park to Theme Park? Evolving Legacy Visions for London’s Olympic Park’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 18.4 (2014).

<sup>523</sup> Interview with Kathryn Firth.

homes quota<sup>524</sup> and that the morphology, the scale and materials should be welcoming to incomers and at a human scale. We can interpret then that there is a desire for the certain aspects of the LLDC's design of what Kathryn called the "London vernacular", to eschew the classist overtones implicit in the earlier "Boris idea" of the QEOP being a new great estate. Therefore even today, we see just how evocative issues of class and urban design are in realising future developments in London.

#### 5.2.4 Migration in East London

Ethnicity and class intersect in the sense that they are both social categories through which people can become marginalised, and that both ethnicity and class can mutually reinforce this marginalisation. Nevertheless ethnic diversity in East London is worth noting here as it plays to some extent into questions of localism and the future development of the area in question.

There is a well-rehearsed description of patterns of migration into east London. It has been common for new migrants to arrive at the "heart" of the East End, Whitechapel and Stepney Green, and as they prosper they gradually move out to suburban locations and eventually out to Essex.<sup>525</sup> This began with the Jewish community, who moved out to Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington and were replaced by, among others, Bangladeshis.<sup>526</sup> As Bangladeshis began to arrive, the more affluent white working classes moved out to the western fringes of Essex: places like Epping, Dagenham and Barking. Of the South Asian groups, the Indian communities moved farther out to places like Redbridge into relatively affluent locations. Unlike the Indians, the Bangladeshi communities have stayed in the core of the East end since the 1970s.<sup>527</sup> Indeed it is since the neo-liberal shift of London in the 1980s, that there has been a reversal in this process. Instead of settling in the core East End, migrants since the 1990s have been arriving into outer Eastern boroughs. Newham is one of these boroughs, where the White British population in recent years has fallen more dramatically than anywhere in the UK;<sup>528</sup> recent clashes in the outer boroughs between right wing groups and migrants, mainly from Eastern Europe or West Africa (the most recent waves), have been noted in the media, and gained political notoriety due to the election of British National Party councillors in these outer east boroughs.<sup>529</sup> As such, new immigrants arriving into London after the 1980s, do not settle in inner-city areas as much as previously. In the 2000s, migrants arriving from East Europe settled in the outer boroughs such as Newham, which we can see in the map below.

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<sup>524</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Local Plan 2015 - 2031*.

<sup>525</sup> Ackroyd.

<sup>526</sup> Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World* (Windmill Books, 2011).

<sup>527</sup> See: Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Black Swan, 2004).

<sup>528</sup> BBC, 'Why Have the White British Left London?', *BBC News Magazine*, February 2013

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21511904>> [accessed 15 February 2014].

<sup>529</sup> BBC, 'Asian Men and BNP Candidate Clash', *BBC News*, 2010

<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/election\\_2010/england/8663681.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/england/8663681.stm)> [accessed 15 February 2014].



Figure 27. Concentration of migrants from "New EU" countries at the 2011 census.<sup>530</sup>

### 5.2.5 Living through urban change in Stratford

Massey's term "thrown-togetherness" is a useful concept for describing the way in which Stratford became focal point an intense *glocalisation* in a short space.<sup>531</sup> Global corporations emblazoned on council estate tower block facades, while global consumers waded through the newly opened Westfield Mall, where its public relations show it is where 'East meets Westfield'. It is obvious who Westfield Mall is really 'for, with the racial composition of the models in all of its advertising being overwhelmingly white and thin. Walking through the private 'High Street' of Westfield Mall that is thinly disguised as a public space, we come to a bridge over railway tracks. This bridge takes us away over the barrier that separates the island of Westfield Mall and the Olympic Park, from established Old Town of Stratford. As we descend the stairs at the other side and cross the street, we are invited into the original shopping mall, built in the 1960s, when Stratford was last redeveloped. This Mall could not be more different from Westfield: there is no train station attached to it, linking it to Paris, or West London, but instead its accents, languages and faces sound and look like recent migration but yet intensely local. There are numerous Slavic shops, stalls run by Afro-Caribbeans, and the old church in the middle of Stratford High Street runs events and markets promoting Anglicanism. Local bus stops throng with people who use Stratford Town as their local centre. The buses go north and east to

<sup>530</sup> Source:<http://datashine.org.uk/>

<sup>531</sup> Massey, *For Space*.

Leyton, and further afield. Thus despite being on the global stage, Stratford is also an intensely local place, despite the fact that people are moving in and out all the time.<sup>532</sup> So although the Olympics claimed that Stratford would be placed on the map, in reality, the map of the world was already contained with Stratford, long before the Olympics arrived.<sup>533</sup> Yet these local and global worlds are linked to each other through everyday processes and only become more starkly defined in such close proximity.

Sandra has lived on a densely terraced street to the East of Stratford Town for the last 20 years, and has seen many changes in the area.<sup>534</sup> Today she is not able to work, and spends a lot of time at home and notices what goes on in her street. She notices the number of migrants who have come from the newly integrated EU states; Bulgaria and Romania, and complains that they are changing the character of the area which used to be more Bangladeshi and Black British. She complains of their attitude towards street hygiene, and that the council are doing little to enforce against fly-tipping. Sandra's back garden is a small oasis of calm from the rapidly changing urban environment outside her home, and provides her with a sense of wellbeing in the face of her anxieties.<sup>535</sup>

Sandra is unusual in the length of time she has lived in Newham. She is largely supported by her daughter who lives in Scotland, and the benefits she gets for her mental health condition. She has mixed views about the Olympic legacy. A friend of hers who runs a shop argues that money has been pouring in. Yet Sandra looks out of her carefully curated small terraced garden and points over the wall to a new development of luxury flats towering over her, the construction of which has led to constant noise and disruption for years. "We feel hemmed in", she sighs.<sup>536</sup>

Thus, when discussing sustainability we can also be talking about mental health and wellbeing as Anderson has recently shown.<sup>537</sup> Although Sandra has kept her home she has suffered from mental stress and anxiety due to the rapid social and economic changes in the area, which as mentioned, impacts her everyday life from fly-tipping on the street, to noise from the new flats behind her. In addition the council are keen to move her to a smaller property as she has an extra bedroom. The resistance against the council's pressure for her to move is also a major factor in her poor mental health.

A more extreme plight, which highlights the stress on housing in the area, comes from the recent eviction of the E15 mothers from Newham.<sup>538</sup> Not far from where Sandra lives, a group of socially excluded mothers recently squatted in social housing that was deemed unfit for habitation and is set to

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<sup>532</sup> Interview with planner at LBN

<sup>533</sup> Observations from walking and note-taking

<sup>534</sup> Home visit and interview with Sandra Jones of Stratford Town, July 2012.

<sup>535</sup> Sandra Jones, interview and house visit, July 2013.

<sup>536</sup> Sandra Jones, interview and house visit, July 2013.

<sup>537</sup> Anderson.

<sup>538</sup> Chakraborty.

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be demolished. The Focus E15 Mothers group as they became known, represent a sharp and unpleasant reality about the most extreme wedge of the external effects of the combination of the Olympic Legacy, alongside major funding cuts to local councils from central government.

Newham Council faced dramatic cuts in funding during the government of 2010 to 2015 and a group of young single mothers who were sheltering at a local homeless unit, specifically for single-mothers, were evicted after the closure of the council run unit. Newham Council offered the women and their children the chance to take social housing in Manchester as an affordable option, especially given that the £500 upper limit of benefit is nearly useless in London as rents for a single-bedroom house exceed this. With thousands of council homes standing empty across London and with the Carpenters Estate<sup>539</sup> which borders the Olympic Park lying nearly vacant, the women decided to squat in a house on the Carpenters Estate to show that there were indeed suitable places to live in Newham.<sup>540</sup> Yet due the externalities of the Olympic development, the land on which the Carpenters Estate sits has increased in value, while the local authority faces funding cuts. Therefore it has become financially rational to destroy the Carpenters Estate and thus a significant proportion of social housing. One of the protesters told me, pointing to a brick on the wall of the house, that it used to cost fifty pence for one brick, and each brick is now worth thousands of pounds. He was trying to point to the abstract, currency value versus the social value of what a house can provide;<sup>541</sup> such is the awareness that local residents have of the real issue here. The issue of housing in Newham was heard at the LLDC's local consultation whereby residents blamed Newham Council for the problem.<sup>542</sup> This seems like a cruel irony for Newham given the fact that it is because of the Olympic regeneration that the Carpenters Estate, and the combined cuts to local councils, that Newham feels it needs to sell the land on which the Carpenters Estate sits. Caught between a Mayoral Development Corporation's externalities of land-value uplift and national government policy of cuts to councils, Newham council comes out as the 'bad' council, when arguably it is under immense financial and demographic pressures from national scale ideological agendas and metropolitan scale regeneration and development pressures.

These observations in and around Stratford make us consider the type of sustainability being advocated by the LLDC versus the impacts in the space around the QEOP. We see above that if sustainability is equally socio-economic as it is environmental, then the intertwining of the social issue of housing, and the economic viability of a system in which it makes economic sense for local authorities to evict people, is clearly problematic. Yet despite the everyday affronts to the idea of sustainability – the sustaining of a system so that it can be viable well into the future<sup>543</sup> – the official

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<sup>539</sup> The Carpenters Estate is a 1960s social housing area immediately south of the Olympic Park. It has been the site of community struggles over evictions and is due to be demolished and the land sold by Newham Council.

<sup>540</sup> Chakraborty.

<sup>541</sup> Visit to E15 squat, 2014.

<sup>542</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Consultation Report August 2014*, 2014, p. 19.

line is that a sustainable legacy is in progress and that it should be applauded.<sup>544</sup> But can we really isolate Sandra's situation, or the processes that led to the eviction of the E15 mothers, to a local system that has been affected only by the legacy? On the contrary, despite many of the issues in and around Stratford which are blamed squarely on the development of the QEOP, these issues are also exacerbated by a London-wide problem of a severe housing crisis. Therefore, the reality of sustainability outcomes versus what is said in policy is highly affected by space and scale. The LLDC vision of sustainability is causing externalities in the immediate existing urban environment which run counter to social sustainability, while the London-wide, metropolitan scale problem of housing is exacerbating the issue. In addition, we could also argue that it makes sense financially for Newham council to sell the land at Carpenters Estate as it could prove useful for cuts elsewhere in the council's budget. Therefore we see the way in that scalar factors affect local outcomes in way that a 'sustainable regeneration' of Stratford had not considered, supporting the notion that sustainability must consider its scalar connections, horizontally to neighbouring places, and vertically to higher tiers of governance. In this context the development of a Greenway provides an opportunity for a vision of sustainable urbanism that does both as we will see in the next chapter.

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<sup>544</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Park 2030*; Mayor of London, *Convergence Framework and Action Plan 2011 - 2015*.



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### 5.2.6 A walk around Stratford



Figure 28. Local and global signifiers compete.<sup>545</sup>

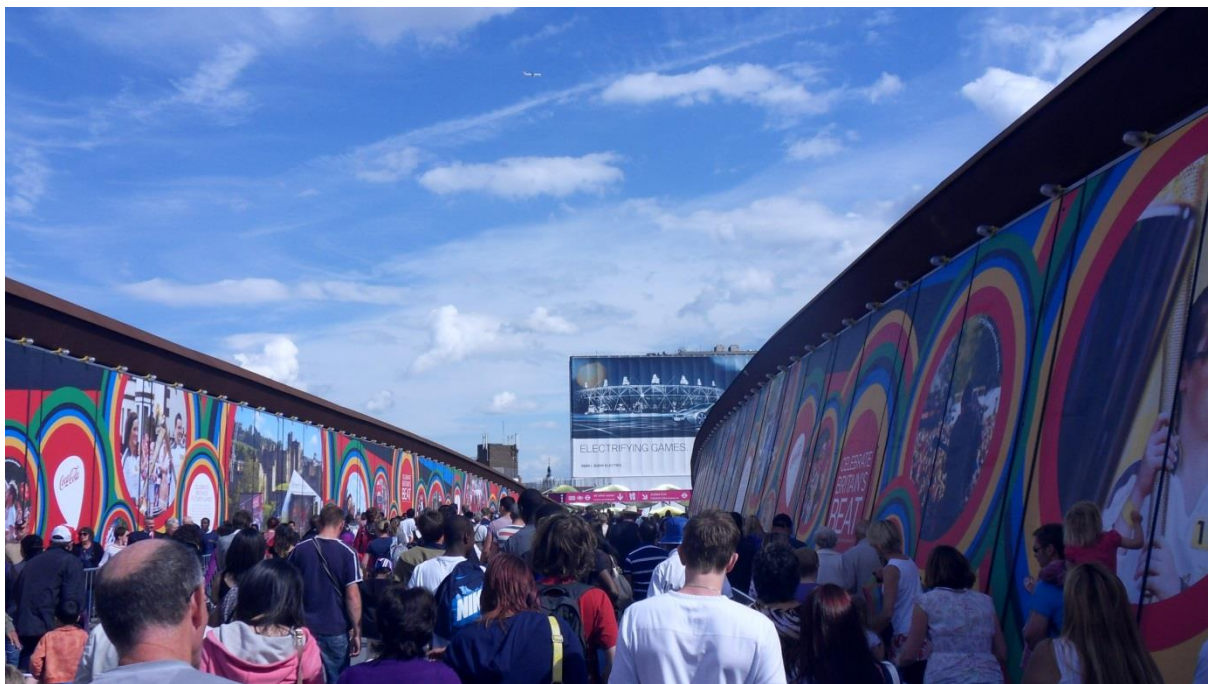


Figure 29. Controlling the crowds. Coca Cola advertising in a borough with very high levels of poor health.<sup>546</sup>

<sup>545</sup> Andrew Hoolachan. 2012.





Figure 30. The terraced typology in Stratford, with inter-war housing at the end of the street.<sup>547</sup>



Figure 31. A Visit to the E15 mothers' squat during their occupation of social housing on Carpenters Estate.<sup>548</sup>

<sup>546</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>547</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>548</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.



## East London and the 2012 Olympic legacy: socio-economic and physical transformations



Figure 32. Eco-localism near the Greenway, community allotments.<sup>549</sup>



Figure 33. The Counter Cafe at Hackney Wick near the western extent of the Greenway: the “pastoral and the post-industrial”.<sup>550</sup>

<sup>549</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>550</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.





Figure 34. Terraces and tower-blocks in Newham.<sup>551</sup>



Figure 35. Urban ruins in south Stratford. New flats the background.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

<sup>552</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012.

### 5.3 The 2012 Olympic Games and Legacy

#### 5.3.1 The Games and London's ongoing transformation

The winning of the 2012 Olympic Games, announced in 2005, came within a context of London's ongoing transformation. In a similar fashion to New York City, due to the role that a resurgent and deregulated financial services sector would play in the recovery of both, London began to recover from decades of decline from the mid-1980s onwards.<sup>553</sup> During the 1990s and early 2000s, London's economy boomed and between 1997 and 2001, the population of Inner London was growing at 50'000 per year.<sup>554</sup> In March 1997, *Vanity Fair* harked back to the 1960s and proclaimed on its front cover that "London Swings! Again".<sup>555</sup> Districts like West Hampstead, Islington and Shoreditch began to gentrify and economic and population growth has since continued eastward. One outcome of this change, was that London became more distinctly disconnected from the UK, and more globalised, competing with other global cities, like Paris and New York noted by Sassen.<sup>556</sup>

This recovery had major implications for large urban projects. Despite the beginnings of private-led reinvestment from the mid-1980s it was really in the mid-1990s that the entire city began to benefit from both public and private investment. It was at the end of the 1990s that Government began seriously investing in the capital, and sought a 15 year programme of reinvesting in London Underground.<sup>557</sup> Similarly, London was gaining confidence over large-scale architectural projects and cultural events such as the opening of the Jubilee Line Extension, the continuing growth of Canary Wharf, the Millennium Dome, the reinvigoration of the South Bank, the London Eye, and the Tate Modern. By 2005, the year of the bid, London's Olympic victory could be viewed as a high-point in this narrative of the re-invention of London, and in being taken seriously amongst the other major cities that had also placed bids. Thus, the games are part of London's general revitalisation and self-confidence which has been hallmarked by major iconic infrastructural and architectural projects from 1990s onwards.

The Olympic Games is an inherently global phenomena.<sup>558</sup> Not only are most of the world's countries represented through sport, its committee, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) comprises global stakeholders. In addition, sponsorship deals are also global, with the usual names such as McDonalds and Coca Cola providing sponsorship to host cities. In recent decades the global mega-

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<sup>553</sup> Sassen.

<sup>554</sup> GLA, *The London Plan*, 2011, p.16.

<sup>555</sup> David Kemp, 'London Swings! Again!', *Vanity Fair*, 2007  
<<http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/archive/1997/03/london199703>> [accessed 14 February 2014].

<sup>556</sup> Sassen.

<sup>557</sup> Interview with James Tringham, Transport for London, 2013.

<sup>558</sup> Gold and Gold.

event has also been supported by, and in turn strengthens, the new model of execution where global sponsors are relied upon to provide funding, rather than states. Gold calls this post Los Angeles period, the neo-liberal paradigm of mega-event execution.<sup>559</sup> The execution itself is usually a tightly concentrated and intense binge over a few weeks in the summer, followed by long term plans to realise benefits from this rapid development.

In the film *What Have You Done Today*, Mervyn Day local voices from Stratford in the run up to the Olympic Games were heard. The main narrator made note of the area's industrial past, how it came to be today, and why it is ripe for change. This film was described as an obituary the Lea Valley. Yet, one must ask if it wasn't for this global event being staged here, would 'the local' of Stratford be captured in such a way. To what extent then is the local enabled only when it is threatened by outside change? Thus the execution of the games, although certainly implanted into a piece of existing city with dramatic social, political and environmental consequences, engendered a debate of the local worlds around Stratford previously undocumented.

Olympic events are faced with the constant problem of having to appease international, national, city and local pressures. At an international level, corporate sponsors, architects, financial institutions and of course, the IOC, are all key agents.<sup>560</sup> At the national level, governments must negotiate public opinion, national development priorities, infrastructure development, and often large public subsidies.<sup>561</sup> However it is the cities which host games, which probably have the greatest task of appeasing all actors in the mega-event execution. Firstly a city's level of autonomy is important in its dealings with the nation and international organisations. London had a particularly strong role to play, it being a devolved administration, with a Mayor and a strong identity within the nation. Large, global cities do wield much power in hosting Olympic Games, and perhaps this is why in recent years, it has been such cities that have been given the Games: Sydney, Athens, Beijing, London and soon, Rio, are a far cry from earlier events in Barcelona, Atlanta and Munich for example,<sup>562</sup> which are further down the global cities hierarchy.<sup>563</sup> In any case, the power of London is evident in the establishment of the LLDC, which was set up by powers granted to the London Mayor, in order to steer the 30 year Legacy of the Queen Elizabeth Park, the former Olympic Park and Athletes Village.

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<sup>559</sup> Gold and Gold.

<sup>560</sup> Gold, J. & Gold, M. *Olympic Cities: City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896 - 2016*. Taylor & Francis Ltd (London: 2010).

<sup>561</sup> OECD, *Local Development Benefits from Staging Global Events : Achieving the Local Development Legacy from 2012*, 2012.

<sup>562</sup> Gold and Gold.

<sup>563</sup> GaWC, "The World According to GaWC 2012" <<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2012t.html>> [accessed 14 February 2014].

### 5.3.2 Eastern growth of London's economy

Within London, the siting of the Olympics in the *east* of London, is also in general conformity with on –going state and private sector drive to expand the economy eastwards.<sup>564</sup> While the regeneration of the Docklands began in 1984 with the establishment of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC),<sup>565</sup> a wider plan to increase population and employment further east was solidified in 1990 and was known as the Thames Gateway scheme, championed by Michael Heseltine.<sup>566</sup> Had London not won the Olympics, the town of Stratford might look different today, but the general regeneration of the eastern region of London would have certainly continued, as funds were already in place for future Thames Gateway expansion before 2005.<sup>567</sup> It has been argued that money had been diverted from Thames Gateway, to help deliver the Legacy of Stratford and the Lee Valley.<sup>568</sup> The East End of London has and still has the capacity for large amount of population and economic growth, partly due to its relative poverty but also due its well-connected transport infrastructures such as the Jubilee Line extension, the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), London City Airport and coming of Crossrail. Given that the Legacy is set to “transform” East London, it will be unclear in any future assessment how much growth and improvement would not have happened anyway. For example, Thames Gateway was only wound down as a development corporation after the games were won. Had the games not been won the Thames Gateway would continue to be a current site of major investment and regeneration.

The Lea Valley and the Thames Gateway, has long been on the eye of London's planners as a strategic growth area.<sup>569</sup> Had the Olympics not been won, government money would have continued to be put into the long-term growth objectives of the Thames gateway.<sup>570</sup> The Lea Valley has for decades been a difficult site for planners in London.<sup>571</sup> Cutting through the urban grain of East London with rivers, canals, reservoirs, sidings and industry, it has faced several attempts at being united with the surrounding urban area.<sup>572</sup> The Thames Gateway too has since the 1980s been part of a long-term strategic growth plan, building housing and jobs in the former industrial areas east of the

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<sup>564</sup> Phil Cohen, *On the Wrong Side of the Track?: East London and the Post Olympics* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2013).

<sup>565</sup> Carmona, ‘The Isle of Dogs : Four Development Waves, Five Planning Models, Twelve Plans, Thirty-Five Years, and a Renaissance . . . of Sorts’.

<sup>566</sup> Graham Haughton and Phil Allmendinger, “Spatial Planning and the New Localism”, *Environment and Planning A*, 41: 3 (2013), 37–41.

<sup>567</sup> Gavin Poynter and Iain MacRury, *Olympic Cities: 2012 and the Remaking of London* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>568</sup> Mann.

<sup>569</sup> Allmendinger and Haughton, ‘Soft Spaces, Fuzzy Boundaries, and Metagovernance: The New Spatial Planning in the Thames Gateway’; Brownill and Carpenter; Raco, ‘Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities’.

<sup>570</sup> Mann.; Iain MacRury and Gavin Poynter, *London's Olympic Legacy*, 2009.

<sup>571</sup> Mann.

<sup>572</sup> Design for London.

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Isle of Dogs out towards Tilbury and Essex. The Thames Gateway Development Corporation closed in 2013, a year after the London Legacy Development Corporation opened for business.

Today, the Thames Gateway area that falls within the Greater London boundary is known in the London Plan as “City in the East”.<sup>573</sup> There is an attempt to dramatically grow this area and with it improve the amount of ‘places’ and connect them strategically. A recent planning summary which sets out the future vision for East London states that the area can host an additional 260000 new homes, 360000 new jobs and that

*London’s growth is driving a renewed interest in the east, and the potential exists to plan for it as part of the city rather than apart from the city... Part of our work is to try to overturn the historic perception of the east being seen as apart from London, rather than as a part of London. It is time to reclaim the City in the East for London!*<sup>574</sup>

An expression of this is available in map form, which shows how the GLA see the growth of East London an integrated manner.

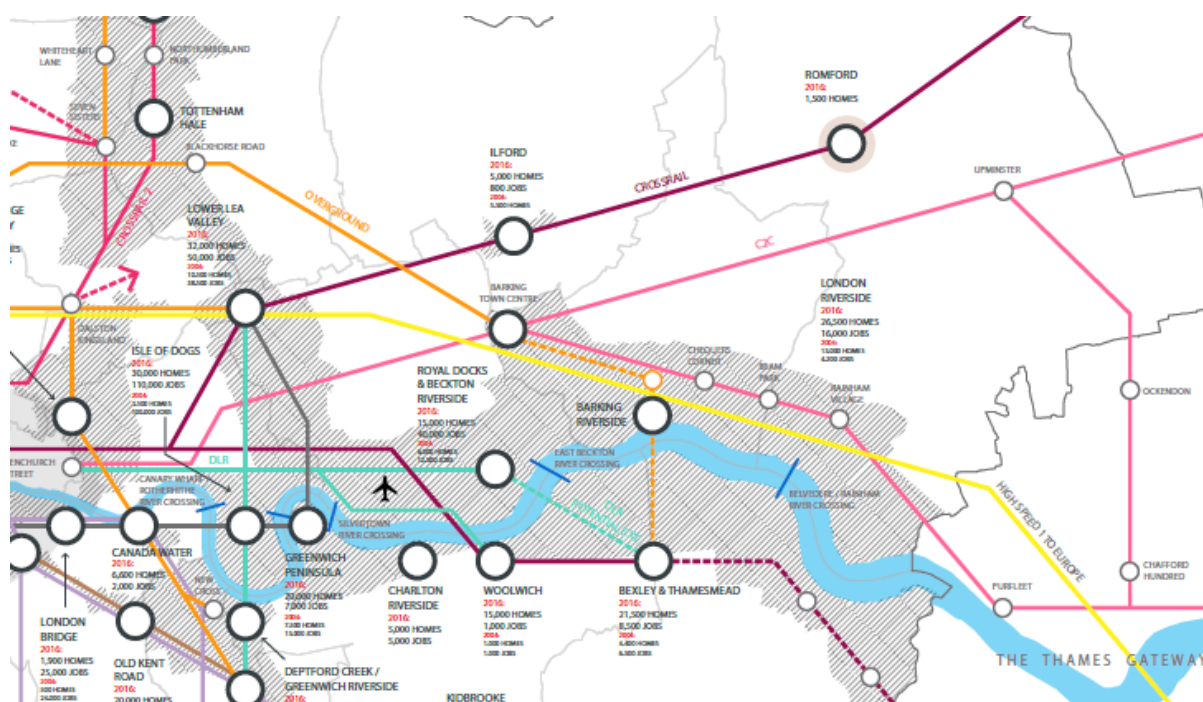


Figure 36. Excerpt from "City in the East" plan.<sup>575</sup>

<sup>573</sup> Greater London Authority, *City in the East*, 2016.

<sup>574</sup> Greater London Authority.

<sup>575</sup> Greater London Authority, p. 3.



### 5.3.3 Legacy promises and convergence

*The Mayor will work with partners to develop and implement a viable and sustainable legacy for the Olympic and Paralympic Games to deliver fundamental economic, social and environmental change within east London, and to close the deprivation gap between the Olympic host boroughs... and the rest of London. This will be London's single most important regeneration project for the next 25 years. It will sustain existing stable communities and promote local economic investment to create job opportunities.*<sup>576</sup>

The London Plan, 2014

*Within 20 years the communities who host the 2012 games will have the same social and economic chances as their neighbours across London.*<sup>577</sup>

The Growth Boroughs' definition of convergence.

The main instrument to measure the success of the many legacy promises of the Games across *East London* is 'convergence'. This is that the Index of Multiple Deprivation will converge with the average of the rest of London's boroughs by 2032.<sup>578</sup> London has 32 boroughs which are governed by Borough Councils, who are responsible for local services such as planning, housing, streets, council tax and so on (the City of London is a 33<sup>rd</sup> local government authority but not classed as a London Borough). The six boroughs who hosted the games are called Growth Boroughs and it is through these that the 'success' of the legacy to regenerate East London will be measured.<sup>579</sup> At least this is according to an official from the Growth Boroughs who claimed that using "grown up" modelling,<sup>580</sup> we can predict this. Significant questions about the validity of this approach have been raised, particularly the extent to which metrics which show an overall improvement in IMD will have been skewed by affluent incomers, and the inequalities within boroughs which are not captured in the borough-level reporting.<sup>581</sup>

Under Localism all boroughs must agree Local Plans which go out to consultation before being approved. In 2015 the LLDC will have had its Local Plan approved giving it centralised power and authority to plan and manage its estate.<sup>582</sup> This has been given in respect of the Localism Act 2010<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> Mayor of London, 'Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014'.

<sup>577</sup> The Growth Boroughs, *Convergence*, 2015.

<sup>578</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Park 2030*.

<sup>579</sup> HM Government and Mayor of London, 'Inspired by 2012: The Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games', 2013; Oxford Economics, *The Growth Boroughs Development Portfolio*, 2011.

<sup>580</sup> Conference notes. "The Impacts of Mega-Events on Cities", University of East London, Sept. 2013.

<sup>581</sup> Conference notes. "The Impacts of Mega-Events on Cities", University of East London, Sept. 2013.

<sup>582</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Local Development Scheme*, 2012.



whereby planning authorities should submit local plans. While under this legislation individuals can challenge the authority with their own plans, the LLDC is committed to following the London Plan's assertion of the rapid development of the Olympics, made clear by its attitude towards risk in way it has tick-boxed the actions taken after consultation to its Local Plan.<sup>584</sup> This is that, they assume that any contestation can be easily neutralised if they take effective measures in advance with regards to advocacy and transparency. Here we see a very top down approach at 'managing' conflict as a by-product of a highly professionalised 'delivery' of the local plan, and further substantiates Raco's work in this area.<sup>585</sup> Davis further adds to the idea of managing time as well space in the way in which there is an assumed future trajectory of the LLDC plan which seems to silence alternative futures.<sup>586</sup>

#### 5.4 Conclusion: the Greenway as a transformational link

*The Greenway is one of our key sustainable transport assets in the borough, and we have long term ambitions for significantly increasing usage.*<sup>587</sup>

Richard Wadey, Sustainable Transport Officer, London Borough of Newham

In this chapter we have considered the urban context of East London. We have shown that it is a site which has long been a poor relation to the rest of the city; that it was and remains a site which reflects national anxieties over cities and the environment; and that it therefore has been the focus of experimentation in urban planning in the last 150 years. We also showed how the urban landscape has been shaped by the twin processes of infrastructure development and constant housing redevelopment, from the inter-war era, to late twentieth century regeneration. The Olympic Legacy is set to transform the six Growth Boroughs in East London, however the physical dimension of transformation and these policies do not seem to be linked in any way. There is no obvious spatial dimension to the Growth Boroughs' convergence plans. Instead, the physical regeneration of East London is taking place at the QEOP through the development of a new piece of city, and in a more distributed sense at numerous sites across the former Thames Gateway areas. Neither the physical development of the QEOP nor the Thames Gateway developments conform to the wider agenda of convergence for East London. In addition, the ambitions of the growth boroughs focus purely on the economic or socio-

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<sup>583</sup> Mayor of London, 'Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014'.

<sup>584</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation, *Consultation Report August 2014*.

<sup>585</sup> Raco, 'Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012'.

<sup>586</sup> Juliet Davis, 'Urbanising the Event: How Past Processes, Present Politics and Future Plans Shape London's Olympic Legacy' (London School of Economic and Political Science, 2012).

<sup>587</sup>

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economic dimensions of a sustainability model within a status quo position of national and metropolitan economic growth. This is at odds therefore with the interpretations sustainability set out by the LLDC and Newham as we saw in Chapter Two. The Greenway may offer opportunities to overcome this disjuncture between policy visions and the role of physical space in promoting various types of sustainability.

There is no other singular line of mobility in East London that is solely for pedestrians and cyclists, which connects the fragmented enclaves of socially diverse Stratford to the rest of the borough, the future growth areas such as Beckton, and to the rest of London. Indeed, the path is highly valued by cyclists and is part of three different long distance paths which connects places within Newham and Newham to the Olympic Park and the rest of Greater London as outlined in the London Plan.<sup>588</sup>

This is vital in the context of what was promised with the 2012 Olympic Legacy. The upgrade of an infrastructure like the Greenway for it to be used more fully than it is today, could provide that missing link that unifies the borough of Newham, and would show that the Legacy was genuinely committed to bringing the scope of sustainability further out from just the LLDC area and Stratford. The Greenway would also aid more integrated forms of planning at multiple scales, from connecting local areas within Newham, from integrating Newham with surrounding boroughs, and aiding London's metropolitan scale growth of growing the metropolis eastward. The type of growth advocated by the London Plan would be considered a status quo vision of sustainability as we discovered was the case in Chapter Four. This means that the Greenway can either can be used to conform to a status quo vision of development, or be shaped and developed by alternative visions of sustainability from bottom-up neighbourhood planning. Visions of sustainability from neighbourhoods may offer an alternative to the metropolitan and national visions of what sustainability means, if they have the capacity to do so. As we will show in the next chapter physical manifestations of the national policy of Localism reflect the contested visions of what a sustainable localism means within and between different neighbourhoods. This may have dramatic implications on the future of the Greenway assuming national economic and planning policies stay the same in the years ahead.

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<sup>588</sup> GLA.

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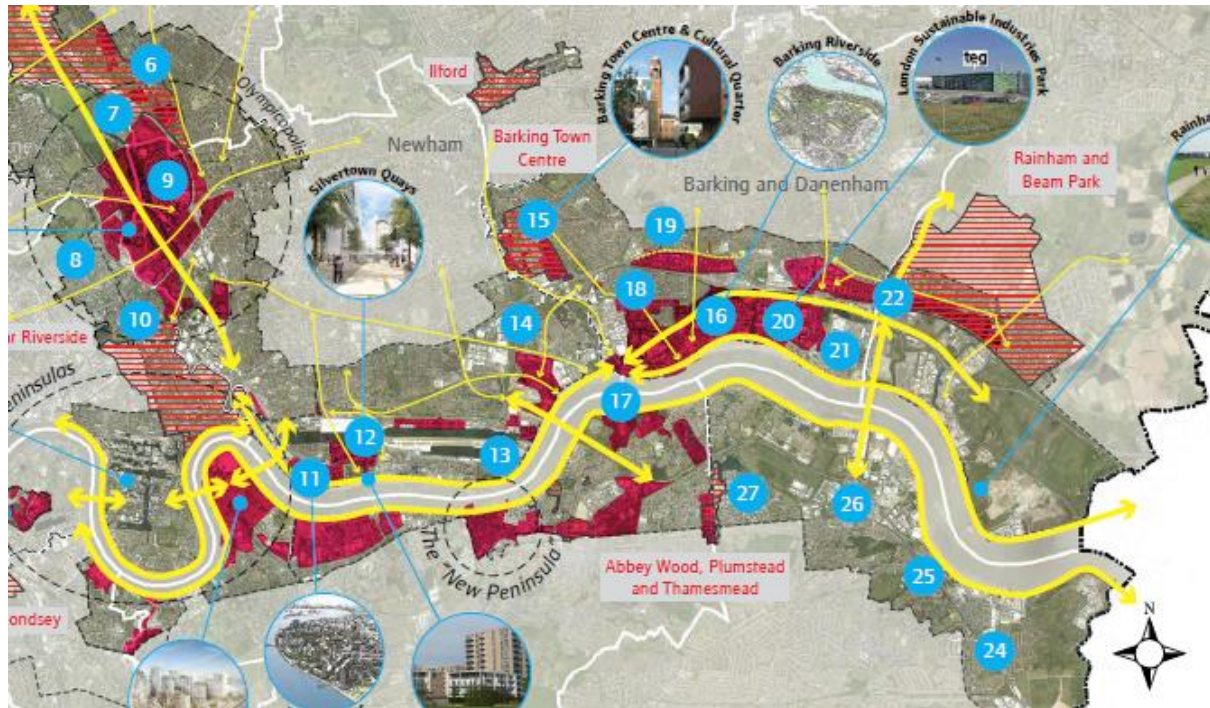


Figure 37. Greenway featured within regional plan for East London connections to places.<sup>589</sup>

<sup>589</sup> Greater London Authority, p. 7.

## 6 Localism and sustainable urban development along the Greenway

### 6.1 Introduction

*The reinvigoration of the Greenway is yet another example of the legacy provided by the Games. It will benefit a great many people, helping to create a fantastic green route to be used and enjoyed by walkers and cyclists for decades to come*<sup>590</sup>

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, 2009

In this chapter I will show how the potential of the Greenway makes it both an important connective infrastructure and a social space which can significantly increase the potential for varying types of multi-scalar sustainable urban development in East London. In doing this I show the ways in which localism can be a significant national policy barrier to projects that require working across multiple-scales in an urban context. I will also show how the Localism Act is just one type of localism and that alternative localisms<sup>591</sup> in the context of sustainability are possible. In doing this we will consider the different ways sustainability is conceived at the metropolitan and neighbourhood scales, and the inherent tensions that scale generates within sustainable urban planning.

The section of the Greenway between Victoria Park and Beckton that we are studying runs for 5 miles on top of the northern outfall sewer. On its surface it supports a singular, uninterrupted cycle route and pedestrian walkway. Between the paths and the fencing that demarcate its edges exists a variety of greenspace, but mainly grass and hedges. The width of the Greenway on its surface is approximately 6 to 7 metres – the equivalent of a side-street - and includes the paved area and the grass surfaces. There is therefore a total surface area of around 48000 square metres that represents a large void in which a great variety of activity or development could take place. The constraints on the Greenway are the load bearing on the flat surface that covers Bazalgette's sewers underneath, and the shallow depth of soil that limits any structure requiring deep foundations. The sloping embankments in particular may provide opportunities for development, especially in the areas where the Greenway intersects with road crossings at street level.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Adams and Sutherland, p. 55.

<sup>591</sup> Catney and others; Hildreth.

<sup>592</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

The structure has a varied relationship with the surrounding landscape. Although for most of its length its surface is about five metres above the natural surface and slopes steeply to meet the ground on either side, this prominence above the surface gradually falls along its length until the Greenway is once again flush with the surrounding land. Despite this, when walking or cycling along the Greenway there is no sense that there is any significant slope: like a railway line, the gradient is very slight.

Therefore the Greenway supports a variety of activities that can be deemed sustainable, from connecting urban areas to being used by a variety of local residents for a number of purposes. The biggest determinant on the Greenway's use are its physical characteristics, particularly how users locate and access it. The Greenway can only be accessed at the designated access points as it is fenced off along its entire route which strongly determines how people use the space and influence its scalar dimensions which we explore in a subsequent section.

### 6.2 Greenspace planning in London

Managing London's urban growth and its relationship with nature, both in and outside its borders, has been a subject of concern since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century;<sup>593</sup> greenspace planning in London today has developed out of this history. London's main planning document for green spaces today is known as the *All London Green Grid* and is a strategic planning document for London's greenspaces. The Greenway that forms part of this grid is a network of linear parks and open spaces which are latticed throughout London's urban grain. In this sense the Greenway is both a local greenspace for surrounding neighbourhoods as well as a link to parks and other greenspaces across London that is aided by its use as a connective pathway.

Irénée Scalbert argues that greenspace planning today can be traced to *Picnics in the Greenbelt*, an ironic manifesto by the architects Mark Brearly and Julian Lewis who formed the practice *Studio East*.<sup>594</sup> As an environmental socialist Brearly believed in 'peopled landscapes', the notion that greenspace must fulfil a social role in addition to a purely aesthetic role. In some ways this mirrors the assertions that society and nature should not be considered as separate realms and that urban natures are inherently politicised through use, management and ownership.

The idea, discussed in Chapter Three, that urban natures can be functional and woven through the fabric of cities instead of conceptually detached from urban life is oppositional to the original idea of the greenbelt. Brearly and Lewis both argued that the greenbelt was a "conceptual space without

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<sup>593</sup> Abercrombie; Ackroyd; Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*; Halliday.

<sup>594</sup> Irénée Scalbert, 'London After the Green Belt', *AA Files*, 2013.

density”. In doing so they mirrored the anxieties of Abercrombie who, after the adoption of his plan for London, remarked that “little has... been done to knit the whole together into a continuous system of footpaths, park strips, riverside walks, bridle-ways and green lanes”<sup>595</sup> despite the fact that he valued the greenbelt highly as “keeping open large tracts of land for the visual solace of man”,<sup>596</sup> invoking the other oppositional typology.

*Picnics* thus argued for a re-examination of the spaces of the green belt and breaking the hard boundary between city and country. This was under the context of Rogers’ ‘urban renaissance’ that argued that London was running out of space and had to densify as we saw earlier. However, Brearly and Lewis envisaged the greenbelt as an enormous common going back to Colin Ward’s anarchist traditions and that it would become London’s back garden or a vast ‘territorial bricolage’.<sup>597</sup> Despite their focus on the greenbelt, their intellectual impulses have directly affected greenspace policies inside the urban area of Greater London.

In *Picnics* we see greenspace being valued as more than an idealisation of *first nature*, but rather how greenspaces are accessed and used. Such an approach to nature in the city moves us further away from a romantic view of nature and towards one that is concerned with social as well as environmental issues in our normative sustainability model. It further helps us to overcome the Cartesian duality discussed earlier where nature is conceptually separated from the urban.<sup>598</sup>

Scalbert argued that the breaking down of the hard conceptual boundary between city and country, had enriched the previously modernistic approach taken by the London Ecology Unit.<sup>599</sup> David Goode, who set up the London Ecology Unit, argued that everyone in London should be within 1km of green space.<sup>600</sup> This approach, although top-down and simplistic reflects a new relationship that was being advocated between citizens and parks: the idea that people should have a basic geographic proximity to nature in the city. However, despite beginning the process of mapping London’s network of green spaces for the first time using aerial photography, little attention was paid to the qualitative aspects of the green spaces in terms what they were and how could they be used.<sup>601</sup>

The London Ecology Unit was eventually disbanded and became the Architecture and Urbanism Unit under Richard Rogers and with a shift of focus. Green spaces throughout the city weren’t to be just known and formalised by planning but enhanced by people-centred design. Thus, the intrinsic value of nature had been convincing and won in the 80s and 90s with it being argued that green spaces were a ‘good thing’. A people-centric approach to green spaces emerged with the gear-shift in planning

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<sup>595</sup> Scalbert, p. 9.

<sup>596</sup> Scalbert, p. 9.

<sup>597</sup> Scalbert.

<sup>598</sup> Gandy, ‘Urban Nature and the Ecological Imaginery’; Loftus; Neil Smith, *Uneven Development*;

<sup>599</sup> Scalbert.

<sup>600</sup> Scalbert.

<sup>601</sup> Scalbert.

theory in the late 90s.<sup>602</sup> There was then a new focus on the design and planning of green spaces for social interaction and access rather than just green spaces as ends in themselves, cut off conceptually and physically from other urban processes and needs. This new approach became crystallised in the *East London Green Grid* that eventually became the *All London Green Grid*, overseen by the GLA.<sup>603</sup> Therefore planning theory in London today is, from the perspective of practitioners, one which seeks to make greenspaces functional and accessible to people.<sup>604</sup> The LDA funding for numerous projects along the Greenway reflects this, although owing to the effects of Localism none of have come to fruition as we shall see.

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<sup>602</sup> Colomb; Rogers; Scalbert.

<sup>603</sup> Scalbert.

<sup>604</sup> Mayor of London, *Green Infrastructure and Open Environments: The All London Green Grid - Supplementary Planning Guidance*.



### 6.3 History of the Greenway



Figure 38. Newham after the outfall sewer (~1880s)<sup>605</sup>

The two map above shows the areas of West and East Ham, roughly contiguous with today's borough of Newham after the construction of the Northern Outfall Sewer in the 1850s. There are two points of note regarding the Greenway and its relationship with the surrounding urban morphology. Firstly, the sewer was constructed over greenfield land and the urban area of Greater London subsequently grew around it over the next century. Like railway lines, houses back onto the Greenway and it is fenced off. Access to the Greenway is only available at certain access points, which strengthens its potential as a cross-borough route, but makes local access more difficult.

<sup>605</sup> Unknown source.



The Northern Outfall Sewer over which the Jubilee Greenway cuts through the Olympic Park and the borough of Newham was thus planned and constructed during the early days of municipal growth. The land surrounding the sewer was largely open fields and extended beyond the official boundaries of London, amounting to what could be argued to be a regional scale intervention. Rivers and their tributaries must be thought about as interconnected regional processes, particularly where they interact with human activities.

Outbreaks of cholera and the pungent smell which plagued the areas surrounding the Thames, combined with the general trend of ‘circulation’ in engineering discourse (see Haussmann’s Paris), enabled Parliament in 1855 to clean up the Thames, referred to at the time as having ‘The Great Stink.’<sup>606</sup> By the mid-50s the fear over the stink reached crisis point and in 1855 Parliament passed the Metropolis Management Act. Following this, the grand construction of sewers began and enabled the flow of waste on a regional scale to move in an east-west direction which was caught by draining from the natural incline of the Thames Valley into the sewers which ran parallel to the Thames.<sup>607</sup>



Figure 39. Map of Bazalgette's sewers<sup>608</sup>

The scheme was so vast and expensive that it caught the attention of Haussmann and Napoleon III<sup>609</sup> who would between the 1850s and 1870s undertake Paris' well-documented *Haussmannisation*.<sup>610</sup> These grand European schemes represented the idea that the city could be seen as a system to which

<sup>606</sup> Halliday; Andrew Hoolachan, 'The "nature" of Legacy under Localism: Fragmentation along the Greenway', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 18 February (2015), 342–52

<sup>607</sup> Halliday.

<sup>608</sup> Source: <http://historyday.coldray.com/bazalgettes-actions/>

<sup>609</sup> Halliday.

<sup>610</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Verso, 1983).

urban ‘surgery’ could be applied in order to increase the circulatory flows of air, light, capital, labour, water and sewage that would define the infrastructure of the emerging concept of the ‘modern’ city.<sup>611</sup>

### 6.4 Ownership and management

The Greenway is owned by the private utility company Thames Water and under common law is considered a permissive path (see Appendix for original permission). This means that Thames Water gives permission for it to be used by cyclists and walkers but are able to close the path whenever they wish. Many landowners who own permissive paths also close the path down for a specified day every year to prevent the path from becoming a Right of Way. A Right of Way is a legal status given to a path which has been used as a permissive path in an uninterrupted manner for more than 20 years.<sup>612</sup> Therefore to prevent Rights of Way, landowners often close paths down to ensure that the 20 years condition of continual use is not met. Under its current status then as a permissive pathway, it is fenced off along its entire route with access granted at specific access points.<sup>613</sup> It is closed off after dark when the gates are locked.

As councils face major funding cuts there is a risk that, as councils sell assets and offload financial responsibilities, green spaces could be sold off to be run by private companies.<sup>614</sup> The ownership of the Greenway by Thames Water plc is incidental as the Greenway itself only exists because of the sewer infrastructure on which it sits. It is unlikely that the Greenway will ever be sold off as a structure as it will continue to function primarily as a sewer for the foreseeable future.<sup>615</sup> What does remain uncertain is the extent to which the public will get even more access. There is certainly demand in the area for the Greenway to open beyond 7pm, as well as for it to be lit and secure and cleaned up. The section that is in the LLDC area already has negotiated 24 hour access with Thames Water, but the section through Newham council is only open from 7am to 7pm in the summer with even more restricted access in winter – mainly due to lighting and security issues. At the time of writing, plans to light the Greenway are in progress and are being negotiated between Thames Water and the London Borough of Newham.

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<sup>611</sup> Berman.; Graham and Marvin.

<sup>612</sup> Ordnance Survey, ‘Everything You Need to Know about Rights of Way’, *The Official OS Blog*, 2011 <<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/blog/2011/08/rights-of-way/>> [accessed 13 January 2017].

<sup>613</sup> Interview with Richard Wadey.

<sup>614</sup> Todd Fitzgerald, ‘Private Firms Get Go Ahead to Run Council Services’, *Manchester Evening News*, 2015 <<http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/private-firms-go-ahead-run-council-8855076>> [accessed 13 January 2017].

<sup>615</sup> Correspondence with Thames Water engineer.

## 6.5 2010 Wider Vision study

Interest in upgrading the Greenway to a multi-functional Greenway, a community asset and an icon of urban sustainability was strong enough that the LDA and architects Adams and Sutherland produced the *Greenway Vision Study*,<sup>616</sup> which was a 129 page document outlining the characteristics and challenges of the Greenway and its surrounding area, as well as an array of social projects to connect the Greenway as a singular “whole” across this part of East London. The LDA was mentioned as a major funder among the costings for each project .

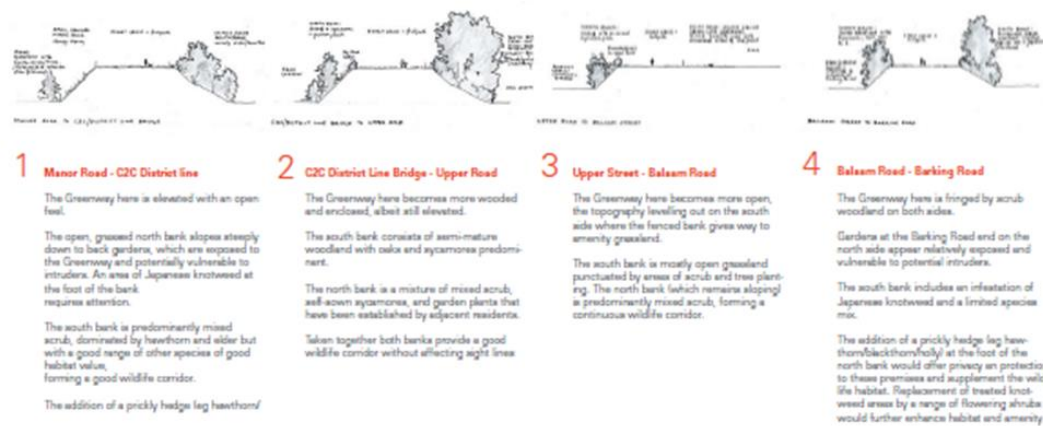
Graeme Sutherland said, regarding the decision to scrap the project that “With the abolition of the LDA the Strategy lost its primary funding stream and momentum, but there remain some small opportunities within the GLA”.<sup>617</sup> Further, he said that the impacts of loss of the Greenway Vision Study runs “completely counter to the London Plan with its emphasis on the All London Green Grid”. So here we see again a tension between a national and metropolitan interest over the use of green space.

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<sup>616</sup> Adams and Sutherland, p. 18.

<sup>617</sup> Email correspondence with Graeme Sutherland of Adams and Sutherland Architects

## Landscape Character: Typical Sections



18 The Greenway Vision Adams & Sutherland February 2010

Figure 40. Example of cross-sectional analysis<sup>618</sup>

<sup>618</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

## Localism and sustainable urban development along the Greenway



The Greenway Vision Adams & Sutherland February 2010

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Figure 41. Example of intervention along the Greenway<sup>619</sup>

<sup>619</sup> Adams and Sutherland, p.85.



Figure 42. The Mounding.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> Adams and Sutherland, p. 90.



## 6.6 Physical impacts of the Localism Act on the Greenway

### 6.6.1 Abolition of LDA and the “Duty to cooperate”

*The regeneration of many areas of the capital has hinged on a slice of the LDA's budget, and the roll-call of the schemes with design excellence at their heart is impressive — such as Acton market square, Brixton's high street and new public square, Woolwich town centre, Thames Barrier Park, plus projects in Sutton, Whitechapel Road, Aldgate, Barking, Dalston and many more. The end of the LDA's budget means the end of this genre of projects...*

*The rising panic over the future of London regeneration is more than frustrating for those who care about London's built environment. But it also calls into question how localism will manifest itself on the ground.*

*Most local authority planners I have spoken to expect their staffs to decrease. The support and advice that they were able to get from Design for London will disappear. As councils are expected to deliver projects which meaningfully involve local people, they will call for help and find there is no one to answer them. Larger projects — such as the LDA-funded work on London Thames Gateway Heat Network, a sustainable hot water system planned to serve 120,000 homes — are not going to be spontaneously invented by private-sector developers either. They take strategic thinking, and seed funding, from the public sector to become a reality.*

*...there should be a single, unified urban design office within City Hall that can support the boroughs in making long-term plans. And it should be made up of dynamic and design-conscious individuals from Design for London, not paper pushers with no design ability. London must find a place in its administration for the people who know what they are doing when it comes to making a decent city, and a budget to empower them.*

Figure 43. Above: ‘Say Goodbye to the London Development Agency’, *London Evening Standard*<sup>621</sup>

Among the many projects and upgrades at various sections of the Greenway, one key funder that was always listed in the costings for each individual project was the LDA. As Kieren Long writes above, however, the LDA was abolished in 2012 along with other Regional Development Agencies across the UK meaning the Act was directly responsible for closing down the London Development Agency.<sup>622</sup> The Localism Act contains a section titled “Duty to co-operate in relation to planning of

<sup>621</sup> Kieren Long, ‘Say Goodbye to the London Development Agency’, *London Evening Standard*, 2010 <<http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/say-goodbye-to-the-london-development-agency-6531785.html>> [accessed 10 October 2014].

<sup>622</sup> Crown Copyright, ‘Localism Act 2011’, p. 109.

sustainable development” that encourages neighbouring Local Authorities to work together on strategic issues of sustainable development:

*For the purposes of subsection (3), each of the following is a “strategic matter”—*

- (a) *sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas, including (in particular) sustainable development or use of land for or in connection with infrastructure that is strategic and has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas.*<sup>623</sup>

Despite this, it is clear that the ‘duty to cooperate’ is beset by institutional challenges in this case. Since 2012, despite Graeme speaking of “small opportunities within the GLA”, the local councillors and planners at Newham have remarked that there has been no progress on their section of the borough. Although the planners at Newham have a good relationship and knowledge of the planners at the LLDC, and both have sat on the same committees and agree overall plans, the focus of the planners is generally on their own authorities’ deliverable concerns.<sup>624</sup> This highlights the problem of abolishing the London Development Agency, which was very good at “leveraging public money for public projects” across the capital which fed into the London plan.<sup>625</sup>

Had the LDA been in place, the Adams and Sutherland Greenway vision could have been secured and fulfilled the very notions of a sustainable legacy for East London. This would have been based on either a continuation of the kind of landscaping and underlying understanding of sustainability in the QEOP, or as is evident from the Greenway, a better used connective structure that would link a set of interventions and improved public space.<sup>626</sup> Despite the written legislation advocating a duty to co-operate on these cross-borough matters, the reality has turned out to be rather different at least in respect to this particular project. We can see very clearly that the implementation of a planning policy from national government has led to the collapse of a cross-borough project in East London and heightened differences in outcomes at the local level.

The London Plan still exists and the strategic co-ordinated plan for Greater London and will help to bring the Boroughs together on cross-boundary issues. For example, cycle superhighways that run on existing roads are an example of cross-boundary planning, as is the GLA’s investment in cycle ‘quiet ways’ around the capital.<sup>627</sup> However, as we saw in Chapter Four, despite a strong sense of strategic planning through the London Plan much of this power is now more centrally controlled by the Mayor’s office. This means that outer boroughs have less control and often have to deal with political decisions made at Westminster or City Hall without the resources to do this effectively. This can be

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<sup>623</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/110>

<sup>624</sup> View shared by interview with Alex Savine and Newham Planner.

<sup>625</sup> Interview with Colin Wilson, Senior Planner, Greater London Authority

<sup>626</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

<sup>627</sup> Interview with Richard Wadey, Sustainable Transport Officer, LBN



seen explicitly along the Greenway where the section of the Greenway which runs through the LLDC planning authority was heavily upgraded in terms of public realm and landscaping, which sits in contrast to the neighbouring Borough of Newham whose section of the Greenway remains informally planned.

### 6.6.2 Neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood planning is the second key cornerstone of the Localism Act in relation to local people being able to plan for their areas.<sup>628</sup> Neighbourhood plans can be submitted by local community groups, acknowledged formally by the council, and then must go through a seven stage process including a local referendum to get the plan acknowledged.<sup>629</sup> As stated earlier, the geography of neighbourhood planning is often determined by the social and cultural capital available to neighbourhood groups following significant cuts to local government funding to planning. With regards to neighbourhood planning and the effect on the Greenway, there is no effect on the Greenway through the Act. The collapse of the Greenway upgrade outlined above has not been offset by any formal neighbourhood local planning which may revive it in some way. As a planner at the Borough of Newham pointed out:

*If you look at the boroughs that have the most neighbourhood plans they are mostly central boroughs. The problem with Newham is you have the massively instable population, we call it the churn - 25% per year. However, if you have people that are not going to stay around very long, then people are less likely to care. It does vary, there are pockets that are more articulate, but again no interest in a neighbourhood plan. It is hugely time-consuming and expensive. You would always encourage people if they have an issue with planning, to work with the council, in order to achieve what they wanted through existing channels, rather than set up another organisation and do it that way.*<sup>630</sup>

LBN planning officer

The lack of neighbourhood planning, the officer states above, is related to the instability of the population. He seems to infer that local interest is best served by people with long term interests in a community owing to the length of time they have lived – or intend to live - there. This is an additional cause of the lack of neighbourhood planning in addition to the social and cultural capital arguments

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<sup>628</sup> Gallent, Iqbal and Manuela; Wills.

<sup>629</sup> London Assembly Planning Committee.

<sup>630</sup> Interview with Planner at London Borough of Newham

outlined earlier. The London Assembly planning committee reported on some of the main barriers to neighbourhood planning in London given that their uptake in London has been particularly slow.<sup>631</sup>

Around 80 of London's 1,200 neighbourhoods, that cover 624 electoral wards, have expressed any interest in the process. One neighbourhood plan has so far been adopted and is now influencing the development of a local area. It is difficult to imagine more than a handful of plans will be in place by the time of the next election – some three years after the legislation came into effect.

The reasons for this are difficult to pinpoint, but there is evidence to suggest that the legislation was designed for smaller, more homogenous areas than London. London's complex network of mixed communities with diverse interests seems to make even defining neighbourhood areas a difficult and time consuming process – and this is just the first stage of the process.<sup>632</sup>

This extract reminds us of the challenges in defining a community spatially and that in urban areas like London this may be more of a challenge. More significantly, there are more procedural barriers to neighbourhood planning even after the local has been defined in London. There is a 7 stage process from making a plan to its realisation and part of this process is that the plan must always go to a referendum. At the same time, huge financial costs can accrue in these plans; local councils end up footing some of the bills and local groups pay for the rest. There can also be wasteful duplications where groups need to hire planning consultants for work which could have been done more quickly by in-house planners in the city council.<sup>633</sup> As the planner from Newham pointed out, it would be easier for neighbourhood forums to work with them directly. This supports the claims by Wills that neighbourhood planning is inherently linked to local capacities.<sup>634</sup>

The report also found a distinct geographic pattern to neighbourhood planning across the city where, unsurprisingly, the western boroughs have inherited an array of local interest and heritage groups along with stable, older and wealthier populations. The boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea and Camden accounted for the strongest level of interest, taking a 46% share of official interest. The entire area of Kensington and Chelsea is covered by 21 neighbourhood forums. Although interest has been shown in other boroughs the scale hasn't been the same and even where applications have been submitted progress has been slow in implementation, as outlined above.<sup>635</sup>

In the next section we will see that a form of neighbourhood planning is already taking place in one ward of the borough of Newham. This form of neighbourhood planning is the preferred option from

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<sup>631</sup> London Assembly Planning Committee.

<sup>632</sup> London Assembly Planning Committee, p. 5.

<sup>633</sup> London Assembly Planning Committee.

<sup>634</sup> Wills.

<sup>635</sup> London Assembly Planning Committee report

the perspective of both the council and the users as, although not formally designated by the council or through the channels of the Localism Act, it is based on existing relationships and precedents between individuals in the community and the council.

That these projects are going ahead with lottery funding is of course a good thing for the communities of Plaistow South. And even if the bordering neighbourhoods had the money to plan their own plans and bring forward their projects, this would also be a good outcome. But from a sustainability perspective we must think of the whole of the Greenway rather than just small incremental parts for it to reach its full potential. If the Mounding were to go ahead, it would be useless as a place to visit without a full upgrade of the Greenway, especially in terms of free cycle hire, a café nearer to the Mounding, lighting, CCTV and more relaxed opening times.<sup>636</sup> As we showed earlier with the cycle segregation in the LLDC area, there is no point in having an upgrade of the Greenway if it works against the Greenway's inherent multi-scalar role, being both local and metropolitan in significance.

### 6.7 Uses of the Greenway

It was argued in Chapter Four that planning policies that operate over varying scales carry differing conceptions of sustainability, placing a different weight on specific dimensions such as economic growth or social equity. We looked at this through analysing their discourses and understanding their context within the broader policy landscape. The NPPF defines sustainability very loosely from a growth-based position; the London Plan sought sustainability through job creation; the local plans diverged based on their different local circumstances, the LLDC being radically more eco-centric than the almost non-existent Newham approach. In this chapter we looked at the impact that planning policy has on the Greenway. We see that national level policy, the Localism Act, has led to a policy failure that exposes divergent local capacities most starkly along the Greenway. We now show how sustainability is articulated differently at different scales based on its uses and potential futures, leading to tensions within the triadic model posed by Campbell.<sup>637</sup>

We look at three major uses of the Greenway that were found and how within each there are both scalar and sustainability dimensions. We look at how they operate based on site-based analysis, interviews, photography and from the Adams and Sutherland Greenway Vision Study. For each, we reflect on how the two clauses of Localism Act, the abolition of the LDA and neighbourhood planning have affected the potential for sustainable urbanism.

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<sup>636</sup> Interview with Paul, manager of Viewtube local café and activities centre.

<sup>637</sup> Campbell.

### 6.7.1 Community use and planning

The Greenway is a community space that is used by local groups and individuals for a variety of social and solitary activities that vary depending on their location on the Greenway. Aside from its everyday use the Greenway is also a site for community planning. In the words of Cox, this is a space of engagement, one way in which community can be defined.<sup>638</sup> ‘Community’ is here not so much defined by a boundary but comes together *through* the Greenway which fosters conversation and action around its upkeep. It is defined not necessarily through a boundary alone but rather through a dispersed network of individuals who *become* a community when discussing the future of the Greenway. Thus the idea of the local is contingent on an issue around the future of planning a physical space. Here we see an example of a discursive idea of the local which deals directly with the materiality of a physical place. Scale – the local – is thus both discursively and materially understood.

During the research period of observation, note-taking and meeting and being introduced to local people there were three main ways in which the Greenway as a site of community planning emerged. Firstly, it was noticed that the Greenway was a site of informal interaction between people who frequent the Greenway on a regular basis as a place to either relax or walk their dogs. The way in which the space was used was directly linked to its existing state of upkeep and the issues raised by local users directly matched those found in the Adams and Sutherland study. The second main way that it was used as a community space was through local educational facilities and youth groups. Again, as a site of community action, a group of students made a film about the Greenway’s future. Lastly, the Greenway became the focal point for one particular neighbourhood: Plaistow South. The section of the Greenway that runs through Plaistow is the subject of this district in particular as the community had received funds for its upgrade, but only on the section that runs through their community and not the wider borough of Newham.

#### 6.7.1.1 *Everyday use and desire for an upgrade*

While on several walks along the Greenway it was noticed that the combination of hard and soft surfaces, in the form of some benches and grass, meant that for people who lived close to an immediate access point the Greenway was, in the words of Brearly, a “peopled landscape”. The Greenway is defined as a greenspace according Newham council but like all urban green areas its uses are implicitly defined by its physical form and the immediate urban environment around it. The main activities found that were not based on using the Greenway’s length (not running or jogging), were

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<sup>638</sup> Cox.

dog-walking, lingering and sitting. I asked a dog-walker about why they used this space and they noted that it offered a safe place to take the dog as it was free of traffic and convenient; it also had bins so that dog waste could be deposited. The walker lived in the houses immediately adjacent to the Greenway's boundary and near one of the more accessible and obvious access points. The walker only came for five or ten minutes, however. Talking a walk in any direction along the linear route would have meant that the user would have to walk back, either along the route they came or out through the next access point and through streets to get back home. Therefore the Greenway at its most local scale evolved around entering and leaving by the same access point, which meant that it gave rise to short activities such as a 10 minute dog walk or somewhere to sit briefly.

The use of the Greenway by dog-walkers was noted in the *Greenway Vision Study*. Along with other users, it became clear that as a local social space its future was highly valued by the community. In particular it has a great deal of local focus on improved lighting, paving, benches, bins and general "cleaning up" of the space, particularly such plants as hogweed around the fencing. These have all focused on the inter-related aims of increasing use and increase feelings of safety along it. The community was consulted by Adams and Sutherland in 2009 and their views about the future of the Greenway feature in the report.

**Table 4. Priority aspirations for use of the Greenway<sup>639</sup>**

Community Aspirations
<p>Keep clean</p> <p>Make it a safer space</p> <p>Make it easier to navigate</p> <p>More bins and benches</p> <p>Encourage more uses and users</p> <p>Improve fencing and boundaries</p>

### 6.7.1.2 *Local youth*

Newham has the youngest population of all London's boroughs.<sup>640</sup> This fact may be of use to note in the way in which the Greenway is used, both by primary school and sixth form students. Thus the

<sup>639</sup> Adams and Sutherland, p. 53.

<sup>640</sup> Aston-Mansfield.

## Localism and sustainable urban development along the Greenway

second way in which life on the Greenway is used as a focal point for the community is through its use by young people at local educational facilities on the Greenway. The New Vic College, a sixth form college, sits adjacent to the southern border of the Greenway. As part of a film studies class the local students made a film about upgrading the Greenway and with it were able to generate a vast amount of qualitative data. In the film they asked a variety of users from individuals to teachers, school children and local councillors, about how they use it currently and what they would wish to see improved in the future. Forhad Hussein, the local councillor of Plaistow said in the film that

*it's a fantastic cycle and walking route, and it's a great alternative to get from one side of Newham to another. We've seen a lot of improvement down the Stratford end, at the same time we've seen an increase in community activity*<sup>641</sup>

Similarly a local school teacher who runs a cycling club for children said “It’s an amazing facility. We love it”, and she takes the children on weekly outings on their bikes or scooters to a nearby local park. So here we see the Greenway’s importance as both a connector and a social space. Finally, Richard Wadey who is now a Sustainable Transport Planner at Newham Council was also interviewed on the video and said that “It’s a vital traffic free route. The Greenway offers a nice quiet corridor”.

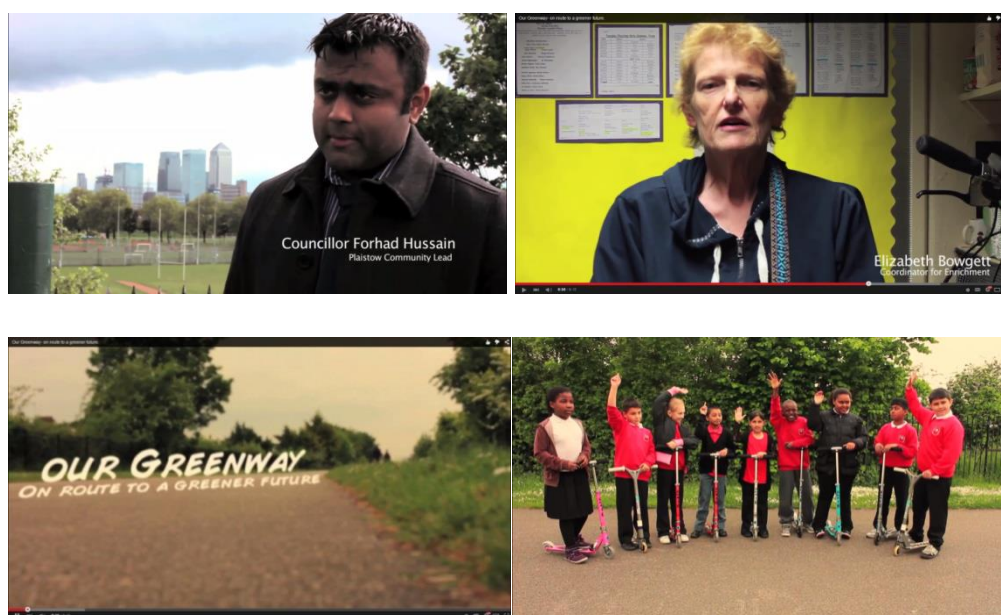


Figure 44. Four stills from the New Vic College student film<sup>642</sup>

The students who made the video found similar feelings to those expressed in the Adams and Sutherland study regarding upgrades. These mainly related to safety, comfort and access: benches for

<sup>641</sup> New Vic College, ‘Our Greenway: On Route to a Greener Future’, 2013  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liNXuFtmdc0>> [accessed 13 January 2017].

<sup>642</sup> New Vic College.

people to sit down, lighting, CCTV, more litter management as was found in the earlier work by Adams and Sutherland.

In its current physical form, the Greenway also makes it difficult to do multiple activities simultaneously, e.g. it hasn't been designed in an integrated manner. For example, if one went for a jog and got tired there are few places to sit down. If one wanted to know how far it is to the next access point, there are no way-finders to tell you how far the next access point is. If it started to rain, there is no shelter. A pertinent example of the Greenway as a difficult space to use came through its use by a mother and child having difficulty in exiting the Greenway to use the park which the exit led to. This situation instigated me to go over and help them. The young boy had brought his push-scooter and they were struggling with the gate to leave the Greenway. While offering them help, I used this moment to ask about the Greenway, explaining that I was a researcher. She was able to explain to me that they usually come here on their way home after school and the Greenway was a useful link and explained how it could be improved through lighting to make it safer. However the problems of poor integration are clear: using a scooter along the Greenway, and then struggling to exit the scooter to access an adjacent park, owing to poor accessibility points in the form of off-ramps and swing-gates.

### 6.7.1.3 *Plaistow South “Big Local” (PSBL)*

A further way in which the Greenway is a site of community planning is through the National Lottery fund called Plaistow South Big Local (PSBL). This is one neighbourhood of 150 across the UK who will collectively benefit from £100 million over 10 years to go towards “good causes” in these communities. By its nature this constitutes community planning as all causes which are local have to be decided upon. PSBL has £1million to spend until 2024. Simon Vincent, the Community Development Co-ordinator, was asked about the role of PSBL in encouraging use of the Greenway and future upgrades as part of their future plans.

*Although encouraging use of the Greenway is part of the PSBL Plan, this has mostly been done through lobbying the Council to pilot the new lighting and CCTV coverage, and through using one section for our Plaistow Youth Market. We've been talking with the Council about making the section between Barking Road and Prince Regent Lane a market/performance/event space.*

Simon Vincent, Community Development Co-ordinator, Plaistow South Big Local<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> Email correspondence with Simon Vincent

## Localism and sustainable urban development along the Greenway

In addition to lobbying the council for upgrades, PSBL has an ongoing programme of local activities that take place on the Greenway, for example creating temporary markets for the community. This is perhaps the most transformative aspect of the Greenway as a community space when we consider the urban environment of the Plaistow South community. If we look at the map below we can see the PSBL boundary, which is based on the Plaistow South political ward. However, from walking along the main streets of Plaistow and from the map below, we can see that there is no discernible 'public place'. The Greenway, which transects a major road with bus routes and nearby shops and facilities, places a 'gap' in the urban grain right at the heart of Plaistow South. As such the Greenway has the potential here to function as a flexible public space or town centre which is able to hold temporary activities such as the Youth Market.

The particular physical characteristics of the Greenway lend itself to holding a community space for Plaistow South. Firstly, the Greenway here is at ground level and is therefore able to bisect other routes. In the case of Plaistow South, the Greenway crosses two major roads allowing easy access to and from the Greenway as well as a better awareness of its presence in the local area. The section of the Greenway between two roads, of around 150 metres in length, creates a naturally 'public space', as pointed out by Simon Vincent, between Barking Road and Prince Regent Lane (see below). This would allow for a much larger market or public space in comparison with another access point at another point along the Greenway. Users would be able to access it from two places at a short distance from each other, close to major routes and public transport links (see below).

It appears that Plaistow South has all the characteristics to make it an ideal candidate for neighbourhood planning. It has the PSBL group who would act as the de facto 'parish council', a set of plans specific to improving the local area, and a formally defined planning boundary taken from its political ward within Newham council. Nevertheless, Plaistow South has no intention of going down this road and its informal status as 'community planning' with little council involvement seems like the preferred course of action. Simon Vincent added

*PSBL hasn't engaged in a formal Neighbourhood Planning process, though we have mentioned this as a possibility to LBN. I get the feeling they don't really want anyone to go down that route, and we don't really have the resources to do so!*<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Email correspondence with Simon Vincent, PSBL





## Summer Market on The Greenway

between Barking Road and Prince Regent Lane



### Saturday 23rd May 11am—3pm

Quality hand-made goods produced and sold by local young entrepreneurs

Pastries, cosmetics, clothing, wrist-bands, jewellery, candles, portraits, glass gifts, cupcakes, hairbows, jams, portraits, music, cards, mobile & tablet cases and more...



**All welcome  
FREE ENTRY**

**Free Bike Checks**  
— A 'Dr Bike' mechanic will check over your bike and make minor repairs



in partnership with

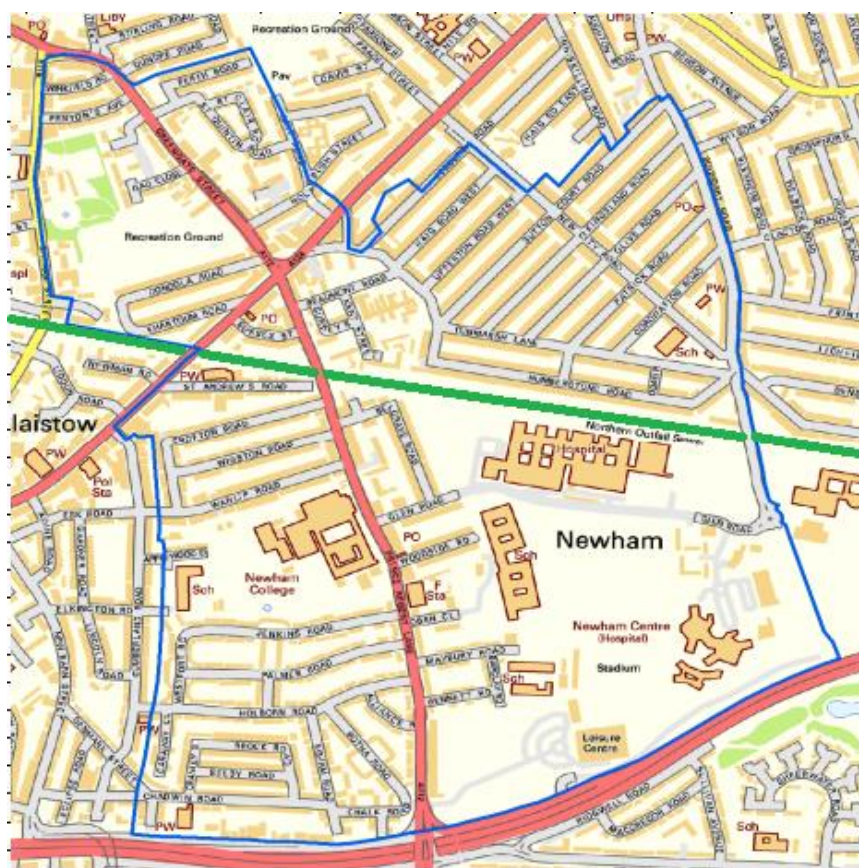







More info from:  
[info@plaistowsouthbiglocal.org.uk](mailto:info@plaistowsouthbiglocal.org.uk)

Figure 45. Advert for Plaistow Big Local Youth market<sup>645</sup>



<sup>645</sup> Source: <http://www.plaistowsouthbiglocal.org.uk/py-market/>

**Figure 46. Adaption of PSBL map by Hoolachan, showing the boundary of the Plaistow Big Local area and the Greenway.**



**Figure 47. Site of potential community and/or temporary public space<sup>646</sup>**

### 6.7.2 Cycling: connecting the borough through sustainable transport

Cycling is a major use of the Greenway: when visiting the site, cyclists were noted in each case, in both directions and at different times of the day. The Greenway is wide enough that it contains a cycle and a pedestrian way in the LLDC section of the route. The cycle path on the Greenway is part of the National Cycle Network and connects to metropolitan long distance cycle routes in London. Richard Wadey argued strongly in favour of upgrading the Greenway for cycling during an interview. Richard's view of the impact of the Localism Act was less financial and more political. He said "We do have access to financial capital but the political capital is questionable". A far more conservative view of cycling along the Greenway and its future growth was held by a senior planner who said that cycling is unlikely to increase in modal share and that he's not convinced the council should be

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<sup>646</sup> Source: Google Maps, 2016.



spending money on it. At the outset we already have an unclear strategy within the same organisation, Newham Council, regarding the role of cycling along the Greenway. This echoes the evidence in Chapter Four where sustainability planning in Newham council was found to be extremely weak.

This confused view around the status of cycling on the Greenway and the need for further upgrades sits starkly against evidence from an online blog which symbolises the slow gentrification of the Borough of Newham as rents and house prices in Hackney and Tower Hamlets push people further out from inner London. A local blog which is dedicated to improving the area's profile for young professionals called EastBLAM features an article on the Greenway and how it connects the borough but add that there is little discussion surrounding it. The conclusion to their humorous summary is below:

*All in all, the Newham Greenway is a great way to get from A to B. You can get from Central Park in East Ham, to Stratford in 25 mins. 18 for speedy speedsters.*

*It's not the prettiest ride you have ever had, but is smooth, and car free so it makes the journey quick and easy. Definitely the fastest (aka coolest) way to travel in E6.*

*It could do with a bit of love from Newham council, but hey ho. The more we use it, the better it will get<sup>647</sup>*

It is clearly being used by a community to the extent that it has made it onto a local lifestyle blog. According to Richard, there is in fact some money being released to Newham for the purposes of upgrading the Greenway for better cycling infrastructure. The main source of funding that is being used to put forward some of the basic upgrades to the Greenway come from a GLA fund called Quiet Ways. This is £120m pot of money over the next 10 years which is to enhance a variety of cycle routes across London on a case by case basis.<sup>648</sup> Newham Council has been allocated money for some work and the main areas of work identified partly come from what was found in the Adams and Sutherland study.<sup>649</sup> The LLDC area has already received substantial upgrade work owing to the general improvements completed in time for the Olympic Games and in its role as a planning authority. Again, we see how the same physical structure is being planned differently at different places along its route due to a lack of policy integration with neighbouring planning authorities.

Despite these planning obstacles, the Greenway functions relatively well for existing cyclists. It is therefore not so much making the Greenway better for cycling that is the issue, but rather that planners could harness the cycle route to enhance uses, projects and developments along the

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<sup>647</sup> East Blam, 'The Bike-Tastic and Car Free Greenway', *East Blam! Explorers of E6*, 2014 <<http://www.eastblam.co.uk/about-east-blam/>> [accessed 27 September 2015].

<sup>648</sup> Interview with Richard Wadey

<sup>649</sup> Interview with Richard Wadey

Greenway. For example, Paul the manager of the Viewtube, a community café in the LLDC section of the Greenway said that his café is used as a meeting point for a local mental health group. The group takes users along the Greenway on bikes that they can rent from the adjacent activities centre for weekly outings. Therefore, and as we will show later, cycling always serves more than a functional purpose of just getting from A to B. As part of a wider integration into urban planning it provides many secondary benefits such as improved mental and physical health that are particularly relevant given the levels of multiple deprivation in Newham we found in Chapter Five.

In the meantime, Thames Water still requires access to the structure at all times because it is first and foremost a vital piece of sewer infrastructure for London. Nevertheless, they are broadly keen for the upgrade but have been cautious in dealing with specific issues that require major works as they are worried about disruption to service access.<sup>650</sup> Given that cycling is broadly popular in London and would require very little disruption, according to Richard it remains the most vital activity catalyst for upgrades that would propel support for further improvements such as biodiversity, lighting, benches and social sustainability such as community events and overall public health improvements.

However, cycling along the Greenway may reflect the conflict between incoming residents and existing residents along the lines of ethnicity and class we found in Chapter Five. There is already evidence to suggest that middle-classes are moving in slowly to both old terrace housing in Stratford old town and new affordable flats in Canning Town. The blog mentioned previously, East BLAM, already encourages a gentrifying pioneer attitude to Newham with its tagline “*Over Shoreditch? Dumping Dalston? Migrating further East? So are we. Follow the documentation of our exploration of E6 and the outer east edge here!*”.<sup>651</sup>

According to Aldred *et al.*, England is a low-cycling English speaking country, a category they have found has statistical significance.<sup>652</sup> They found that in high-cycling non-Anglophone countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark, class, gender and ethnic differences in cycling are far less pronounced. By contrast, in England, the USA and Canada there are strong gender and class differences. Thus the correlation in low-cycling of high social differentials means that in England, cycling is still very much a niche mode of transport, and represented most highly amongst white middle-class males. Another important point is that they found that men are more risk-averse and feel less threatened cycling on the road with motorised vehicles, whereas women and older people prefer complete traffic segregation. They advise therefore that

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<sup>650</sup> Correspondence with Paul Sadler, Engineer, Thames Water

<sup>651</sup> East Blam, ‘About East Blam!’, *East Blam! Explorers of E6*, 2014 <<http://www.eastblam.co.uk/about-east-blam/>> [accessed 13 January 2017].

<sup>652</sup> Rachel Aldred, James Woodcock and Anna Goodman, ‘Does More Cycling Mean More Diversity in Cycling?’, *Transport Reviews*, 2015, 1–17

...planners and policy-makers should study and respond to the infrastructural preferences of women, older people, and other under-represented groups. They should also examine how prevailing images and stereotypes of cycling may affect under-represented groups. Characteristically, the cover of the UK national cycle infrastructure design guide shows a young man on a fast bicycle, with sporty clothing and a helmet. The proximity to motor traffic also pictured there forms part of a broader 'vehicular cycling' approach (cyclists as 'vehicles', integrated with rather than segregated from motor traffic) which has traditionally shaped UK cycling policy. Pucher and Buehler (2009) argue that this approach has proved particularly unattractive to women, older people, and those who are less physically able.<sup>653</sup>

Richard also spoke to me about ethnic differences in attitudes towards cycling in the borough. He looked to the northern areas of Newham around the bustling Green Street area and commented that, for much of the Asian community, a combination of cultural and historical factors mean that for them cycling is seen as being "poor" or lower-class and does not carry the social prestige in the community that driving a car has.

A full upgrade of the Greenway into a more used and accessible cycle way would therefore target two sustainability areas, the social and the environmental. It could help to alleviate an array of socio-economic problems. The policy recommendations of Aldred *et al.* state that policy must get under-represented groups cycling. This would be beneficial for Newham which has a disproportionate number of socially excluded people in London and its youngest population. This could help policy-makers tangibly reach the target of 'convergence' that would contribute to bringing the borough's average statistics for social exclusion in line with the London average and thus meeting their Legacy commitments. But it is the unique characteristics of the Greenway as a safe space to cycle and learn to cycle, that make it even more worthwhile in the context of an urban environment where there may be people who are insecure about learning to cycle for the first time on busy roads.

Planning and urban design would therefore have a direct impact on social indicators, proving that multi-layered and cross-borough planning can be far more useful than a multitude of weakened boroughs with no overall coordination on projects of this scale. This social sustainability at the borough level comes on the back of metropolitan level status-quo growth that is driving the need for improved and connected infrastructure along the Greenway. This is an example of how metropolitan and borough level scales of sustainability are co-produced rather than existing inherently as static

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<sup>653</sup> Aldred, Woodcock and Goodman, p. 13.

## Localism and sustainable urban development along the Greenway

‘arenas’.<sup>654</sup> As such the socio-technical act of ‘cycling along the Greenway’ becomes a prism through which we can frame the scalar tensions around a vision of sustainable urban development.



Figure 48. Viewtube Greenway café, cycling centre and activities hub<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>654</sup> Cox.

<sup>655</sup> Andrew Hoolachan, 2012

## 6.8 Scalar politics of sustainability along the Greenway

In this section we will review the uses discovered along the Greenway and consider how they conform to sustainability models. We will then consider each use and their sustainability in terms of their scalar relations. When we bring scale back in, I show the difficulty in separating socio-natural processes into discreet scalar and sustainability categories, but also that in paying attention to them we are able to highlight the politics of scalar construction that reveal a set of trade-offs within idealised sustainability models.

### 6.8.1 Community use and planning

The uses along the Greenway related to community planning could be classified primarily as **social sustainability**. The Greenway was being used in ways that conformed to ideas of community cohesion, sociability and health and wellbeing. This was through the Greenway becoming a site of interest for community interaction: the community was brought into being more strongly through the various consultations about its future use. It is a highly valued greenspace in an urban area that through walking dogs – or even just resting - encourages positive mental and physical health in a borough which has high levels of multiple deprivation as shown in Chapter Five. In the context of the borough's poor health this means the Greenway has a relatively higher level of social value than boroughs where residents have access to better physical and mental health.

Community planning along the Greenway as social sustainability is also related to **environmental sustainability**. Greater awareness of the Greenway as a space could lead to more interest in ecology and the protection of local habitats and wildspaces in the face of development. However, most concerns about the Greenway's environment were about the upkeep and state of the greenspaces. People wanted the greenspace to be better looked-after, cleaner and safer, mirroring desire for a “matrix reversal” found earlier by Hebbert.<sup>656</sup> There is also some evidence of **economic sustainability** along the Greenway through community planning. This was in the form of the Plaistow South Youth Market, where young entrepreneurs sell the goods that they made as part of previous workshops. The community arts and performance idea suggested by Simon Vincent could also fall into an economic category.

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<sup>656</sup> Hebbert.

### 6.8.2 Cycling

Cycling largely falls into categories of social and environmental sustainability, but supports a broader economic agenda as we will show in the next section. Through cycling, the social and economic are highly interconnected and shows the strengths of using the concentric ring model we found earlier, and the general problems with separating processes into three categories.<sup>657</sup> For clarity, we will attempt to separate the social from the economic before bringing them back together to talk about their scalar politics.

In terms of **social sustainability**, cycling along the Greenway is also a focus for community interaction in the way in which cyclists and new residents to the area hope for further upgrades. We saw this in the New Vic video, the East Blam blog and views of residents in the consultations. Cycling as a mode of transport can be a cheaper and healthier alternative to driving or using public transport and cycling on the Greenway offers additional speed and safety in getting from A to B. This is particularly welcome in one of London's most deprived boroughs where the financial and health and wellbeing savings from cycling would be welcomed. We saw, for example, how the Greenway was used by a mental health charity who take groups up and down the Greenway on bikes. In addition, cycling along the Greenway is beneficial for women, children and others who, in cycling patterns, are more risk averse when using main roads.<sup>658</sup> Cycling also promotes **environmental sustainability** inherently through an improvement in air quality and a reduction in the use of fossil fuels. However, in this case the environmental sustainability of cycling is dependent upon what type of **economic sustainability** is being advocated. If 'sustainable economic growth' means the development of East London using the 'best practice' models of compact development then cycling helps to support this agenda through increasing the population growth without increasing public and private transport use which impacts on air quality and carbon use. On the other hand, if sustainable economic growth is of the kind we have found in the Localism Act and Newham's powers of development control have been deregulated, then the effect of cycling becomes more negligible if it is not integrated with development aims, or if the Greenway is not upgraded to encourage more cycling use. We can therefore already see how difficult it is to talk about urban processes within three categories of use. We now turn to scale, to show how certain processes in the city reflect scalar-natural clusters of integration.

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<sup>657</sup> Lombardi and others; Rydin.

<sup>658</sup> Aldred, Woodcock and Goodman.



### 6.8.3 Scalar politics of sustainability

Let us consider what would need to occur for the ‘integrated ideal’<sup>659</sup> of sustainability planning in East London, with the Greenway as a sustainable spine that was both a form of urban greening and yet a connective cycle-pedestrian which helped to grow the London economy. At the scale of metropolitan planning, where the Greenway is meant to be seen as a joined-up whole, we would be largely talking about a form of sustainable urbanism that fits in with current economic growth agendas. Under this situation, if we are to effectively deal with climate change, current policy would stress that a techno-centric idea of sustainable urbanism would need to be adopted. This would be a normative idea of ‘Best practice’ set out earlier and shown strongly in the delivery mechanisms of the QEOP as shown by Raco.<sup>660</sup> Under this typology it may transpire that planning for an urban Greenway would entail the formal planning and design of the Greenway along its entire length, with a specific view to ‘people’ the greenspace. This would mean that it would likely be formalised, landscaped and lit-up and helped with the use of Thames Water, the private company. There are already discussions underway regarding lighting the Greenway. Under such a circumstance it could also be turned into a private space, as it is not yet genuinely public. This would be akin to ‘urban enclosure’ described by Hebbert, and technically an extension of the already-existing relationship between humans and urban nature as seen in the *Your Sustainability Guide to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park*.

For this to happen, significant support would need to be given to Newham or from the GLA. In addition the GLA would be able to create a policy that Newham would have to conform to which would give the Greenway special status, particularly in consideration of its policies in facilitating the general growth and connectivity of East London. This, as we saw earlier would harness the ‘opportunity areas’ of places like Beckton at the eastern end of the Greenway. As we saw in Chapter Four, the London Plan’s conception of sustainable development promotes economic growth with delivery of sustainable jobs and more housing. Under models of compact and public-transit oriented development the Greenway would be a key connective space for sustainable economic growth. As such we can say that viewing the Greenway as a connected whole may help realise one particular type of sustainability at the metropolitan scale. In this typology the Mayor of London would be the key driver of policy, balancing the constraints of national policy with local authorities and Thames Water. The Adams and Sutherland study therefore represented this type of development with a well-funded London Development Agency able to underwrite a large amount of expenditure for many of the

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<sup>659</sup> Graham and Marvin.

<sup>660</sup> Raco, ‘Sustainable City-Building and the New Politics of the Possible: Reflections on the Governance of the London Olympics 2012’.

schemes. If there is “no alternative” to London’s eastward growth, a techno-centred approach to urban development is required in order to minimise negative externalities of urbanisation at the metropolitan scale.

Yet, under this condition there is an inherent tension within and between neighbourhoods and boroughs. The above form of development could quite easily facilitate an unjust form of gentrification through added connectivity or through the beautification of the Greenway. In this condition the exact same issues faced between the QEOP and the surrounding urban grain could develop, that is, sustainability is used as a veneer for a form of urban development over a particular scale which has negative consequences further afield. The assertion that Greenway improvement would both encourage and facilitate further gentrification of East London reflects the findings by Pierce and Pearsall, particularly if we consider the finding in Chapter Four, that the London Plan had a stronger emphasis on increasing jobs and homes in East London. Evidence from Pearsall and Pierce shows that

Cities have increasingly incorporated social elements into their sustainability plans, yet these social indicators are less oriented towards promoting a more just society and more concerned with quality of life and environmental amenities that might make an urban place more “attractive” for certain communities. This data reinforce the concerns of political ecologists and urban sustainability scholars... as macro-scale sustainability concerns (such as climate change) or the need for regionally competitive environmental amenities (such as parks and open space) begin to dominate the sustainability discourse.<sup>661</sup>

As such, it may be possible for the Greenway to be planned by a series of informal neighbourhood groups and individuals with no overall metropolitan agenda of growth, but rather maintain it as a spine which connects a diverse field of socio-spatial action. This may not be costly upgrades such as better paving and lighting, but could be something more flexible as we saw with the community market. Indeed with the current ownership arrangements, it is difficult for community groups to use the Greenway for activities or structures which require Thames Water to keep the Greenway open for twenty-four hours of the day. This raises further questions about the revival of the urban commons as a form of spatial practice and the relationship it has to the Localism Act.<sup>662</sup> In many senses, notions of commoning are at the heart of the Localism Act’s philosophy, particularly in the way it promotes community asset transfer.<sup>663</sup> But as the Localism Act is clearly pushing a national growth agenda “at all costs” it would be naïve to think the Localism Act represented a benevolent liberation on behalf of the urban commons.

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<sup>661</sup> Pearsall and Pierce, p. 579.

<sup>662</sup> Justin McGuirk, ‘Urban Commons Have Radical Potential – It’s Not Just about Community Gardens’, *The Guardian*, 2015 <<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jun/15/urban-common-radical-community-gardens>> [accessed 10 January 2017].

<sup>663</sup> Crown Copyright, ‘Localism Act 2011’.

## 6.9 Conclusion

In this chapter we considered the Greenway between Victoria Park and Beckton which sits upon the Northern Outfall Sewer, supporting East London's longest uninterrupted traffic-free corridor. We recounted how the Adams and Sutherland study to upgrade the route to transform it into a much better used, known and connective space was shelved directly because of the scrapping of the London Development Agency as part of the Localism Act. Although the Mayor of London still has strategic control over planning in London, the LDA had a particular skillset of leveraging money for cross-boundary strategic issues. Through analysing the various policy influences upon the Greenway, along with the main uses found, we have shown how the route captures social, economic and environmental sustainability. In addition it is simultaneously multi-scalar, being both local to the people who live around its multiple access points, and metropolitan to those who see it as a connective whole. In this sense sustainability along the Greenway can be viewed as conforming to either local conceptions of sustainability or metropolitan and national ones which differ. We find that the Greenway allows us to see the tensions between a desire for it to be cohesively integrated at the scale of East London versus its local uses, which are not so well integrated. In viewing sustainability through scale, using the physical structure of the Greenway, we are able to overcome the romanticisation of sustainable development as achieving a kind of natural harmonious balance either in an anthropocentric conception of the balance of man and nature, or in an ecocentric notion of internal balance. Further, looking at the intersection of policy and the physical allows us to see more clearly the politics of scale behind simplistic notions of sustainable development.

## 7 Conclusion

This thesis opened by presenting the potential risks posed to sustainable urban development through localist agendas that have been identified in the literature. It showed how the Localism Act 2011 and the sustainability agenda of urban planning are problematic when brought together, particularly in urban areas. It presented case studies and theoretical reflections on the Localism Act in England from various scholars, including Catney<sup>664</sup>, Wills<sup>665</sup>, Hildreth<sup>666</sup>, Bailey<sup>667</sup> and Gallent *et al.*,<sup>668</sup> particularly in relation to political theory, such as governance, representation and empowerment. However, we argued that none of these recent studies have paid particular attention to the impacts of Localism on a physical site or project, nor did they seek to address how Localism is related to the broad aim of tackling global environmental change.

In situating this research among the existing literature, we argued that, in order to address the challenges of sustainable urban development, we must design cities in such a way that physical form locks in and promotes uses which contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions, and that the Localism Act can pose a threat to this aim in complex urban areas which require cross-boundary integration. We have seen that this is a particular problem in England and is part of more general debates about the role of government re-scaling for climate change mitigation and wider sustainability aims.<sup>669</sup> We showed how scholars such as Bulkeley and Betsill have extensively charted the changing nature of re-scaling in cities for climate change, and that Cohen and McCarthy have considered re-scaling in relation to physical and natural geographies such as watersheds. We argued that as cities are also socio-natural assemblages,<sup>670</sup> we should therefore consider the impact of re-scaling on cities. We then brought this general idea back to England and showed that Cowell has questioned the impact of Localism on the sustainability aims of planning at the local authority level.<sup>671</sup> However, there has to date been no study of the Localism Act either on a particular sustainability project, or from a theoretical position that stresses the hard connections between policy and physical space in an urban context under the Localism Act 2011. This thesis has sought to fill this research gap by examining the impacts of Localism on a physical project concerned with sustainability under localism.

As a framework for analysis, two organising concepts emerged as useful devices for structuring this thesis: scale and the natural. These two concepts were found to be constant themes in theoretical and empirical studies of localisms and sustainability. This is because the interpretation of sustainability is

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<sup>664</sup> Catney and others.

<sup>665</sup> Wills.

<sup>666</sup> Hildreth.

<sup>667</sup> Bailey and Pill.

<sup>668</sup> Gallent, Iqbal and Manuela.

<sup>669</sup> Bulkeley and Betsill, 'Revisiting the Urban Politics of Climate Change'; Cohen and McCarthy.

<sup>670</sup> Loftus.

<sup>671</sup> Cowell.

highly variegated, as a result of how ‘the natural’ is understood and valued, whether intrinsically, instrumentally, or from an ecocentric or anthropocentric position.<sup>672</sup> In addition, sustainability is always enacted over a particular scale or scalar networks – from the local, to the regional or national. Localism is also based on particular political and environmental understandings of ‘the natural’, whether it is the natural scale at which to govern, or the most appropriate scale of social, economic and environmental processes such as eco-localism or garden cities. Furthermore, localism also opens up questions of what scale is and how it is measured. For example, whether or not the local is a discreet spatial container or whether it only comes into being through engagement with processes at vertical or horizontal scales.<sup>673</sup> We concluded the first chapter with our research framework and with the discussion of site selection. In the second chapter, we described the methods used in the context of urban studies.

In the third chapter we demonstrated the role scale and the natural played in urban planning from the mid-1800s and brought in preliminary empirical evidence to demonstrate the extent to which a dichotomy had been created along the Greenway. We first explored the theoretical discussions around scale, noting the tension between idealist, material ontologies and more recent discursive and performative concepts of *scal-ing*.<sup>674</sup> We showed that scale in the Localism Act is a form of active *scal-ing* in order to achieve national agendas of neo-liberalisation. We then looked at nature in urban planning, particularly through landscape planning in cities, and showed how the history of planning for nature in cities maps onto three types of understandings of urban-natural relationships: separation, reconciliation and co-evolution. Through this periodisation, we saw the ways in which planners have in various ways attempted to integrate nature within cities and how today, scholars working particularly in urban political ecology view the city as an urban-natural assemblage, rather than discreetly separate from nature.<sup>675</sup> We considered contemporary landscape design and the extent to which it actually has anything to do with sustainability, or whether it is merely an aesthetic gesture which reflects the romanticisation of urban natures of wasteland aesthetics.<sup>676</sup> We then provided evidence of two differing forms of urban natures along the Greenway and argued that, through the concept of ‘marginalia’, there is conceptual space for thinking about urban nature that is neither planned for a fixed vision of sustainability nor romanticised as an urban wildscape.<sup>677</sup> We concluded this chapter by considering the role of scalar governance in these landscapes and how the QEOP design is related to a wider metropolitan-scale growth of London, whereby the marginal landscapes of the Greenway are more rooted in questions of the local neighbourhood.

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<sup>672</sup> Carter.

<sup>673</sup> Cox; Howitt.

<sup>674</sup> Herod.

<sup>675</sup> Heynan, Kaika and Swyngedouw.

<sup>676</sup> Carmona, ‘Sustainable Urban Design: Principles to Practice’; Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’.

<sup>677</sup> Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’.

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The question of governance was the focus of Chapter Four, which had two main parts. The first part was a deeper literature review of recent discussions of re-scaling and neo-liberalism followed by a brief discussion of sustainability policy planning in the UK and its relationship to scale. This then informed the analytical second half of the chapter where we analysed the structure and language of policy documents operating at various scales which feed-in to planning on the Greenway. In our analysis we therefore examined national, metropolitan and two local plans. We showed that each policy document understood sustainability differently whilst having a scalar-political relationship. We noted that the NPPF's notion of sustainability was centred around status quo growth, that London's was around housing and job creation, and the LLDC local plan and LBN diverged greatly particularly through their capacities to set out a vision in the first place. Thus, each of these different priorities at different scales presented conflicts or trade-offs in models of sustainability, when we consider them through the concept of scale.

In Chapter Five, we considered the urban context in which our case study sits. We looked at the interaction between space and society in East London, particularly the way in which East London, as a deprived part of the city, has been planned for in the past and present. We highlighted deprivation, morphology, class, migration and everyday life in Stratford and presented a photographic overview related to these issues. We then showed how the 2012 Olympic Games and its legacy are part of a wider historical trend and spatial pattern of developing London's economy eastward. We were able to demonstrate how the legacy will be measured by convergence metrics, but outside of a few isolated projects there is no integration with physical redevelopment and policy aims. The chapter culminated in showing how the Greenway can be a vital link within this process of urban change and could potentially contribute to legacy promises for East London. In this way we have shown the way in which a situated site-based study can be combined with policy analysis to reveal the multi-scalar tensions inherent in sustainability planning.

In Chapter Six, we synthesised the main themes of this dissertation through the multi-scalar and multi-functional site of the Greenway. We first demonstrated how planning for the Greenway comes within a history of greenspace planning in London, before discussing its brief history and contemporary ownership and management. We then examined the London Development Agency-commissioned to *Greenway Vision Study* carried out by Adams and Sutherland architects in 2010.<sup>678</sup> This study presented an integrated vision of the Greenway as a social, functional and environmentally improved greenspace that could help deliver sustainability benefits beyond the QEOP. We argued that the Localism Act played a role in causing this project to fail, particularly through its abolition of the London Development Agency, and because Neighbourhood Planning as part of the Act is not sufficient to carry further improvements forward. Based on field notes and interviews, we showed the

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<sup>678</sup> Adams and Sutherland.

main uses of the Greenway and classified these into community uses and cycling. We found that each use along the Greenway could be categorised under a specific type of sustainability, but that they are inter-related. We showed that uses of the Greenway are all implicated in scalar relations, which in turn create tensions between the idealised models of sustainable development. We demonstrated, therefore, how sustainable development operates in a multi-scalar manner and that these scalar relations reveal the innate tensions between social, economic and environmental notions of sustainable development. Finally, we looked to the future of the Greenway and considered the implications of alternative localisms under the current conditions. This involved forecasting how strategic tensions may arise based on an upgrade of the Greenway from a metropolitan perspective versus a neighbourhood one.

## 7.1 Summary of findings

### 7.1.1 Scale and the natural in urban planning

Since the Enlightenment, we have found a variety of approaches to urban planning which have been explicitly concerned with managing the urban environment. Although many thinkers at the time viewed the urban and the natural as oppositional, we can look back on their plans now and see that they were in fact dealing with processes that were entirely about the “urbanisation of nature”, as we saw in Chapter Three.<sup>679</sup> We found that mid-19<sup>th</sup> century responses to the ills emergent in urban centres saw urbanisation and industrialisation as in direct conflict with the natural world. For example, the response to the urban squalor of Enlightenment Edinburgh was to build an entirely separate new town, to which the wealthier classes fled. Later in the century, a reconciliatory approach took hold in which nature and the urban were to be re-joined or “married” in the words of Ebenezer Howard.<sup>680</sup> This reconciliation, the bringing together of two halves was an idea that bridged architectural styles and political ideologies from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1960s.<sup>681</sup> Urban interventions at a variety of scales were proposed from neighbourhood units around fabricated ‘village greens’,<sup>682</sup> to bounded new towns beyond the green belt,<sup>683</sup> to visions of managing great cities and regions in tandem with nature. Here we see how conceptions of scale and nature profoundly shaped visions for planning cities.

The third phase of urban-natural relations thus has major implications for our changing planet. It is based on the understanding that urban areas, and the human species are not separate from nature, but

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<sup>679</sup> Loftus; Neil Smith, *Uneven Development*.

<sup>680</sup> Howard.

<sup>681</sup> Hebbert.

<sup>682</sup> Hebbert; Keene.

<sup>683</sup> Central Office of Information; Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

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part of it. More than this, human bodies are also highly dependent on their material environments, part of what has been called a socio-natural assemblage. However, the inability of humans to conceive of themselves as, firstly, part of nature, and secondly, living with and entirely dependent upon nature is problematic. Latour states

We have never been modern in the very simple sense that while we emancipated ourselves, each day we also more tightly entangled ourselves in the fabric of nature. Two totally opposite narratives simultaneously... the reality of this modernisation has been exactly the opposite... I think we could easily agree in this assembly that ... nature is not “wilderness” nor the outside, nor the harmonious providential balance, nor any sort of cybernetic machine, nor the opposite of artificial or technical.<sup>684</sup>

The response by architects, planners, landscape designers and other urbanists since the 1970s has been increasingly one of ‘matrix reversal’ whereby greenspaces are being considered as having a social and economic function in cities, rather than just intrinsic value.<sup>685</sup> Secondly, they are increasingly being reintroduced to cities through multi-scalar and interstitial interventions such as, networks of Greenways, revitalised brownfield sites, private parks, green roofs, urban farms and multiple scales from courtyards to urban regions.<sup>686</sup> Among the many results of some of these interventions are those which have been accused of merely being an aesthetic pretence which does little to affect global environmental change,<sup>687</sup> those which facilitate gentrification in cities,<sup>688</sup> and those which are not planned at all and left as *terrain vagues*<sup>689</sup> or “loose-fit landscapes”.<sup>690</sup> In Chapter Three, two very different types of urban greenspace planning in the sections of Greenway planned by the QEOP and Newham council were shown. The former is rooted in a generic idea of ‘sustainable regeneration’ and ‘landscape urbanism’ and the latter had no serious ecological or environmental concept behind it, but was a much-valued community space and car-free pathway nonetheless. Here we see one form of urban greening which is driven heavily by an aestheticisation of urban sustainability discourse, and another one, which involved very little formal planning, but paradoxically resulted in an outcome that conformed more to social and economic dimensions of sustainability.

In whichever way planners respond to the theory of the socio-natural in cities, scalar questions remain about the effects of ‘sustainable urban design’ upon global environmental change. On the one hand, whilst cities may be sustainable at a district, metropolitan or regional scale, as Gandy points out, at the global scale, they are still detrimental for the sustainability of the planet.<sup>691</sup> On the other hand, while

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<sup>684</sup> Latour.

<sup>685</sup> Hebbert; Scalbert.

<sup>686</sup> Bryant; Ahern.

<sup>687</sup> Carmona, ‘Sustainable Urban Design: Principles to Practice’.

<sup>688</sup> Pearsall and Pierce.

<sup>689</sup> Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’.

<sup>690</sup> Thompson.

<sup>691</sup> Gandy, ‘Marginalia: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Urban Wastelands’.



cities are indeed sites of intense production and consumption, processes of globalisation which exist between urban areas such as international travel, resource exploitation and depletion are all part of the same system. Thus, cities are important sites of tackling global environmental change, but they are also part of a wider interconnected system of flows showing that the scalar politics of climate change in our case study is more than just about neighbourhood and national issues, but global ones too.<sup>692</sup>

By analysing localism and sustainability through the lenses of scale and nature, we have seen the legacy today's planners have inherited and the impact they may have on the future. In particular, viewing scale through the lens of the natural shows us that scale is relational. In looking at sustainability and its relationship to localism, we cannot see it as isolated from the local authority, metropolitan or national scales. Similarly, a scalar approach to sustainability shows us that sustainability varies in the prioritisation of social, economic or environmental agendas within sustainable development models we noted, for example, that the economic interpretation dominates national agendas, and environmental and social sustainabilities are more prominent at metropolitan, local and neighbourhood scales of planning. There are also strategic tensions between each scalar site and the vision of sustainability they present.

### 7.1.2 Planning for sustainable urbanism under a localist governance agenda

It is often assumed that localism and sustainability are mutually compatible policies.<sup>693</sup> It has been assumed that if we reduce all of our socio-economic and environmental processes to a more localised scale, this will aggregate upwards to effect global environmental change in a positive manner.<sup>694</sup> This may be the case for certain supply chains, but it is not a universal law, as often assumed by green activists.<sup>695</sup> In addition, when we consider sustainability as more than just ecological and environmental concerns and think of it in terms of social justice and economic sustainability and ethical capitalism, there also exists an assumption that the local is a panacea to various global problems.<sup>696</sup>

The impact of localism in sustainability thus depends on the type of localism and the type of sustainability we are talking about. There are many types of localisms derived from conservative, liberal, libertarian and anarchist traditions. The challenges of realising sustainable urbanism under localism then hinge on the political context in which localism is taking place. With respect to the

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<sup>692</sup> Bulkeley, Tim Bunnell and Peter Marolt, 'Cities and Their Grassroots', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32.3 (2014), 381–85

<sup>693</sup> Cowell; Purcell.

<sup>694</sup> Curtis.

<sup>695</sup> Carter.

<sup>696</sup> Purcell.

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Localism Act 2011, which was passed under a programme of national austerity and major cuts of 40% to local governments,<sup>697</sup> there are number of challenges.

There is, firstly, a general challenge of the deregulation of planning,<sup>698</sup> a long-term “geo-economic project” of re-scaling since the late 1970s,<sup>699</sup> of which the Localism Act is a part.<sup>700</sup> It has a pro-growth agenda with its focus on development “at any cost”.<sup>701</sup> This is related to the recession and subsequent low-growth period, which the government attempted to overcome by making it as easy as possible for property developers. The challenge this poses is a high-level strategic one, whereby the rhetoric of Localism claims to facilitate local democracy and empowerment, but also contains clauses which may increase the chances of uncoordinated and potentially contentious development in certain communities.<sup>702</sup>

There are a variety of challenges to achieving sustainable urbanism through the type of localism advocated by the Localism Act, particularly under an austerity agenda. The first relates to multi-scalar and cross-boundary planning integration. As we have seen with the collapse of the Jubilee Greenway project due to the Localism Act’s abolishment of the London Development Agency, in addition to lack of money to upgrade the Greenway by Newham council, or from a funded Neighbourhood plan, the Localism Act prevented a project that would have otherwise gone ahead. The project may be picked up again at a later date, and there are tentative signs that improvements to cycling provision from the GLA’s Quiet Ways budget will be made, and additional lighting from both LLDC and Newham will be implemented, as we saw in Chapter Six. Nevertheless, the Adams and Sutherland upgrade represented a large amount of money and time in preparation and surveying and there has now been a further delay towards a project that would have added a much stronger aspect of social and environmental sustainability to a part of London that is expected to grow dramatically in coming years in terms of population and jobs.<sup>703</sup> The project may have more potential for success in the future if its connective and relational qualities are taken seriously and planning is integrated across scales.

A second challenge to integration is that of vertical integration between national, metropolitan, local authority and neighbourhood agendas. We have found that visions of sustainability at scales create tensions with one another, as sustainability both in policy and physical and social space are not aligned. The sustainability of the LLDC is therefore thrown into doubt when considered as a tool for the continued economic growth of London. The national policy of cutting local authority funding in Newham has impacted on its ability to deliver a sustainability plan for the borough. The London Plan emphasis on housing and jobs may also create further tension at local and neighbourhood levels in

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<sup>697</sup> Local Government Association.

<sup>698</sup> Lord and Tewdwr-Jones.

<sup>699</sup> Brenner, ‘The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration’.

<sup>700</sup> Haughton and Allmendinger.

<sup>701</sup> Cowell; Crown Copyright, *National Planning Policy Framework*.

<sup>702</sup> Gallent, Iqbal and Manuela.

<sup>703</sup> Greater London Authority.

east London as demand for social services increases. The collapse of the Greenway caused by national policy has created local and metropolitan consequences as an infrastructure that could have been a strategic part of the growth of East London. While there is also the potential for neighbourhood planning to undermine the legitimacy of local authorities, this was not found in our site largely due to the inability for PSBL to do so, and the direct link they have with the council already.

### 7.1.3 The framing of sustainability at different scales of planning in East London

We used Lombardi *et al.*'s framework<sup>704</sup> to analyse our four planning documents using two axes. One of socio-economic equality and one of techno-centric or eco-centric solutions, to assess the structure and text of our policy documents. The NPPF argued for 'sustainable development', stating that "development means growth".<sup>705</sup> The NPPF used the interlinked model of sustainability in which sustainable development is understood as a balance between social, economic and environmental needs. As we have suggested, this model can be considered post-political as it externalises climate change as a detached problem that can be resolved in a technocratic manner. Therefore, sustainable development becomes a veneer over a more nuanced set of national economic priorities. We thus found that despite its claims, the NPPF does not demonstrate a 'balance' between social, environmental and economic sustainability. Despite the claim, right at the beginning of the document, that the purpose of planning is to achieve sustainable development, the NPPF privileges an economic agenda which appear nearer the top. The first section to deal with climate change is tenth out of 14. This means that 'sustainability' in the NPPF is largely weighted towards an agenda of economic growth.

The next tier of planning is the London Plan. London's role as an intermediary between the national and local, and as a fully urban metropolitan authority means that it must balance national and local priorities alongside promoting its own metropolitan strategic goals. This is evident in the way in which the plan has a distinct section on realising the Olympic legacy, which was inherently 'sustainability' and a wider sustainability section. The London Plan therefore sets out London's strategic planning across all its 33 local authorities.<sup>706</sup> As an urban polity it is inherently concerned with sustainability and recognises the 'urban' factor in global environmental change. We found through the structure and text of the plan that, whilst it was broadly in line with national level growth agendas, its discussion of sustainability put greater emphasis on jobs and housing. As such, it can be read as more socially sustainable than the NPPF.

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<sup>704</sup> Lombardi and others.

<sup>705</sup> Crown Copyright, *National Planning Policy Framework*, p. i.

<sup>706</sup> Mayor of London, 'Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014'.

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The LLDC local plan and its supplementary sustainability guidance the *Your Sustainability Guide to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park*, demonstrated what can happen when a planning authority is given a high level of national government backing through finance. This represents the ‘positive localism’ set out by Catney.<sup>707</sup> The LLDC is a Mayoral Development Corporation and is therefore an arms-length body of the Mayor of London, despite having its own local plan. This means that the scalar hierarchy of the planning ‘chain of conformity’ is not as clear cut. Nevertheless, the LLDC local plan presents us with a very clear vision of sustainable urbanism. This is of course skewed by the fact that the QEOP is inherently supposed to be a sustainable place and therefore represents an attempt at sustainability by its mere existence. The local plan reveals a techno-centred approach to sustainable design, in the form of the ‘best practice’ we found earlier, and includes an aesthetic of sustainability that isn’t necessarily linked to tackling global environmental change. Here then we see a combination of inherent and instrumental valuing of nature. Finally, the plan contains a clause for affordable housing, but this is offset by the QEOP’s likely attractiveness to the most affluent and it is therefore hard to see how the QEOP will become a strong example of social sustainability. In summary, the LLDC conception of sustainability is less socially sustainable than the London Plan, but has more emphasis on environmental sustainability through both intrinsic and instrumental values of nature in the way it simultaneously uses a techno-centric approach with eco-centric aesthetics. Economic sustainability does not feature strongly, and where it does, it is linked to the wider London economy. As we saw with the London Plan, the positioning of this plan at the local scale is a factor in how sustainability is framed.

Lastly, we looked at the *Newham Core Strategy* which is that council’s local plan. There was no explicit sustainability plan here and this was confirmed by the LBN official. This may be partly due to significant cuts that Newham Council has been burdened with, but this cannot be confirmed for certain by this research. However, we found that the language of “resilience” and “opportunity” emerged strongly. As we saw, the borough is one of the most deprived in the UK, and since it has received major financial cuts, it is not surprising that a discourse of resilience has emerged where the council have tried to turn what it is very bad economic and social milieu into something more positive. In terms of opportunities, the borough recognises its unique role in London’s eastward growth and the ongoing regeneration of Stratford.

### 7.1.4 The Jubilee Greenway and the challenges of sustainability policy under localism

The Greenway provides us with a strong manifestation in physical space, of the problems of multi-scalar governance for sustainable urbanism under the particular form of localism in the Localism Act

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<sup>707</sup> Catney and others.

2011. The physical aspects of the Greenway – its length, but also its many uses and communities it links – transcend and come into context with multiple planning authorities at different scales of governance.

The Greenway's length makes it multi-scalar in the first instance. It is local to those who use it for dog-walking or having a short walk. It can also connect two different neighbourhoods, for example Plaistow South and Stratford. Lastly it is also of metropolitan significance, with its full length connecting Victoria Park in Hackney, Stratford, Newham and new planned developments in Beckton.<sup>708</sup> In addition, it can be viewed in a regional context with its linkages to the Lea Valley and Thames Gateway. Along this route it contains numerous educational, recreational, social, ecological and leisure facilities. For these reasons, it makes no sense for the Greenway to be planned in a piecemeal fashion, as this undermines the principles of integrated planning. Integrated planning rests on the idea that we cannot simply have greenspace without benches or shelters, footpaths without bins or CCTV, or access points that are inaccessible to certain users or not clearly signposted. In its current state, the Greenway fails to be an example of an integrated multi-scalar space. The Adams and Sutherland study which sought to turn it into a more active social space, was shelved owing to the Act. The impacts of this are most stark when we look at the differences between the types of landscaping in the area that is planned for Newham and the area planned for the LLDC, where facilitates vary wildly. A pertinent symbol of this policy failure are the segregated cycle lanes which exist in the LLDC section but then suddenly stop at the Newham section, so that pedestrians and cyclists have to navigate a much narrower piece of the same pathway. The physicality of the Greenway therefore holds a mirror up to planning policy and highlights the lack of vertical and horizontal planning integration.

The Greenway also passes through different planning jurisdictions and shows how different concepts of 'the local' result in differential planning for sustainability, showing the Act's exacerbation of the capacities to plan both between planning authorities and between neighbourhoods in different parts of London. The LLDC, as we found, planned a very different type of sustainability aesthetics in the Greenway in relation to what was found in Newham and was more akin to a "peopled landscape" with landscape art, a cleaner and better lit environment. The Newham section of the Greenway contains more overgrown grasses and weeds, graffiti, broken fencing and far fewer benches and bins. Yet, both these are at the moment, merely signifiers in the landscape, and have no bearing on environmental sustainability, with only the Newham section having some effect on social sustainability without formal planning. Neighbourhood planning offers a choice for local people to plan the section of the Greenway in and around Plaistow South, but the process of formal Neighbourhood Planning itself is

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<sup>708</sup> Greater London Authority.

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an institutional barrier as Simon Vincent and LBN have suggested and as is evidenced by various studies, particularly the London Assembly Planning Committee.<sup>709</sup>

The Greenway also shows the strategic dilemmas inherent to sustainability planning. It shows that the idea of achieving a balance between social, economic and environmental sustainability is elusive when we apply this model to the Greenway and various planning authorities who have a stake in it. In current conditions London is expected to grow eastward, so a more co-ordinated approach should be encouraged to achieve this aim. Yet London's eastward growth also facilitates a status quo socio-economic model, in conformity with the conservative NPPF which seeks growth at all costs.

Should planning for the Greenway proposed by Adams and Sutherland, which conforms to the best practice of 'sustainable urbanism', be rolled out, and conform to this agenda, or should we embrace a sort of anti-planning from the scale of neighbourhood, and embrace the idea of the *terrain vague*?

This question brings us to the global scale of sustainability. If we are to achieve a global reduction in carbon emissions, we should design our cities in a sustainable manner in accordance with Adams and Sutherland's plans. If the current model of capitalism continues, cities will continue to grow, and in this case, they should be planned according to sustainable principles. On the other hand, the lack of horizontal and vertical policy integration which would enable the plan, or the current condition under Localism, could in effect slow down the slow gentrification and growth of East London through not being an aesthetically pleasant, functional integrated green corridor. This would enable a resistance to the globalising top-down narratives of sustainable development which privilege the economic and may open a space for differing social and environmental forms of sustainability. The Greenway thus reflects the tension lying at the heart of the sustainable development agenda through scale. Sustainable urban planning may well just be a by-product of a global desire for continued growth, even though continued economic growth at the global scale is a major cause of global environmental change. However, if cities are to grow in any case, and current forms of capitalism continue, we should do everything possible to mitigate the damage to the global environment. Therefore, through the Greenway we can see the strategic dilemmas inherent to sustainable urban planning across various scales, from the local to the global.

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<sup>709</sup> London Assembly Planning Committee.

## 7.2 Further issues

### 7.2.1 Implications for localism in England

In a provocative paper Lord and Tewdwr-Jones asked “is planning under attack?” They tracked the history of planning regulation since the early 2000s in the context of Peck and Tickell’s assertion that neo-liberalisation seemed to be everywhere<sup>710</sup> and noted later contributions which have expanded and reflected on neo-liberalism’s multiple formations.<sup>711</sup> They note that planning is a pertinent arena for the discussion of neo-liberalisation because of its central focus on space itself and is the least altered form of statutory regulation, having not changed drastically since Attlee’s famed 1945 government which brought sweeping reform to Britain under the creation of the welfare state and its associated instruments of government, from the NHS to unemployment relief.<sup>712</sup> The problem with planning under neo-liberalism is that it has constantly been seen in need of “fixing” and an impediment to growth. They note

The result is that in a 15-year period (1997–2012) England has witnessed a remarkable five waves of legislative planning reform. On each occasion, the discourse used by politicians has been one of a necessity to “fix” the system on the grounds that it is a chronic obstacle to growth.<sup>713</sup>

Given this, it is unlikely the Localism Act will be a last reform in planning and it may even pale in comparison to wider national strategic issues in the coming years. At the time of writing, the UK is undergoing major strategic upheavals related to rebalancing the English economy through giving more power to large cities under City Deals, and creating a ‘northern powerhouse’.<sup>714</sup> It remains to be seen therefore whether Localism will be considered strategically within these regional questions. This is particularly pertinent when we consider developing ‘sustainable economic growth’, and whether the government takes the view that sustainable planning also has a regional dimension, in for example, having an integrated transport network focusing on a reduction in car use, and effective land-use management where housing developments are built near public transport hubs and at high enough densities.

One positive outcome localism may have is that the establishment of neighbourhood forums may make more people engage in absolute terms, even though from the perspective of equality there is no

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<sup>710</sup> J. Peck and A. Tickell, ‘Neoliberalizing Space’, *Antipode*, 34.3 (2002), 380–404.

<sup>711</sup> Lord and Tewdwr-Jones.

<sup>712</sup> Lord and Tewdwr-Jones.

<sup>713</sup> Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, p. 346.

<sup>714</sup> Ed Cox, Graeme Henderson and Luke Raikes, ‘Decentralisation Decade: A Plan for Economic Prosperity, Public Service Transformation and Democratic Renewal in England’, *IPPR North*, 2014.

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democratic representation which ensures everyone in a community has an equal say.<sup>715</sup> Bringing politics back to the neighbourhood, may re-energise people's engagement in politics around key community issues, defining 'community' not through a physical space but through a local issue.

### 7.2.2 Justice

In the meantime the Localism Act will struggle to take hold in areas which are more deprived and more transient, which will undoubtedly be located in urban areas. Considering that urban areas are the places where climate change action has been argued to be most effective, Localism therefore doesn't seem to be concerned with planning's role as "planning for sustainable development", if sustainability means mitigating against global environmental change. Localism works best according to its aims in stable areas where the notion of community and place is well-defined. These are rural areas and wealthy suburban or inner city district in the larger cities. Indeed, it is parish councils who are effectively the neighbourhood forum in many neighbourhood plans around the country.<sup>716</sup>

This raises questions around planning's role in distributional and environmental justice, concepts which are both extensively covered by Susan Fainstein<sup>717</sup> and David Harvey<sup>718</sup> among many others.<sup>719</sup> From a scalar perspective, the principles of planning as they were established after the Second World War sought to smooth over socio-spatial inequalities between regions and cities.<sup>720</sup> We could argue then that justice was being viewed at the scale of nation. The state wanted to reduce inequities between the north and south, particularly after the widening levels of inequalities between north and south throughout the 1920s and 30s.<sup>721</sup> After decades of re-scaling it seems that the spatial scale over which justice should be applied has gotten smaller and smaller, so that it is now under Localism not planning's role to effect justice at the metropolitan, regional or national scales, but rather that equity is taking place at the scale of the community who, the Act argues, have been pitted against a bureaucratic national government.<sup>722</sup> As we argued earlier this belies the fact that it is not in the government's interest under Localism to achieve equality of outcomes particularly given the obvious socio-spatial inequalities within cities, and between cities and regions. Therefore the Localism Act is directly opposed to the ethos of planning's original goals by firstly reducing the arena of politics to the neighbourhood and secondly erasing the notion that capacities to plan and structural needs are

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<sup>715</sup> Hildreth.

<sup>716</sup> Wills.

<sup>717</sup> Fainstein.

<sup>718</sup> David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, 1st edition (Cambridge, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997).

<sup>719</sup> Catney and others; S. E. Curtis and K. J. Oven, 'Geographies of Health and Climate Change', *Progress in Human Geography*, 36.5 (2012), 654–66; Nylund; Swyngedouw and Heynen.

<sup>720</sup> Fainstein.

<sup>721</sup> Hall and Tewdwr-Jones.

<sup>722</sup> DCLG.



different between neighbourhoods, cities and regions. As the UK begins to feel the effects of climate changes in the form of increased flooding, and as these intersect with existing vulnerabilities such as poverty, we will see the global scale issue of climate change, in addition to the national scale of policy formation, biting hard in communities who cannot afford defence and resilience in the case of flooding.

### 7.2.3 Policy and the physical

Urban planning is often argued to be disconnected from the realities of everyday life. This disconnection from understanding the complexity of urban space and social life has been blamed as the cause of its failure.<sup>723</sup> Planning has been intensely blamed from the destruction of the life of cities particularly in the 1960s and 70s.<sup>724</sup> Since the 1980s planning has also been blamed for aiding the decline of vibrant city centres and being used by the state to promote gentrification.<sup>725</sup> At the same time academics have called for an understanding of society and space to move beyond a simplistic binary, and instead look at the way in which the physical shapes society and society shapes the physical. Conceptualising urban nature in this way, as a socio-natural assemblage, is one way in we can look at how the dynamic processes of constant and adaptive place-making is done. If we spend more time looking closely at cities through observation and engagement with how their physicality shapes social lives and habits, and how these lives and habits then re-work physical cities, we are one step closer at making the profession of urban planning less likely to create future policy failures.

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<sup>723</sup> Jane Jacobs; James Scott.

<sup>724</sup> Jane Jacobs; James Scott.

<sup>725</sup> Atkinson; Colomb; John Rhodes, Peter Tyler and Angela Brennan, 'Assessing the Effect of Area Based Initiatives on Local Area Outcomes: Some Thoughts Based on the National Evaluation of the Single Regeneration Budget in England', *Urban Studies*, 42.11 (2005), 1919–46; Raco, 'Sustainable Development, Rolled-out Neoliberalism and Sustainable Communities'.

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## Appendix A: List of interviewees

List of interviewees and informants				
Name	Company/ Affiliation	Role	Type	Recording method
Kathryn Firth	LLDC	Chief of Design	Phone interview: semi-structured	Notes
Alex Savine	LLDC	Head of Planning Policy	Semi-structured interview with maps	Notes
Peter Studdert	LLDC Quality Review Panel	Chair	Semi-structured interview	Notes
Colin Wilson	Greater London Authority	Planning Manager	Semi-structured interview	Notes
James Tringham	Transport for London	Senior Corporate Communicati ons Manager	Phone interview: semi-structured	Notes
Paul Shaw	Viewtube	Manager	Semi-structured interview	Notes
Richard Wadey	London Borough of Newham	Sustainable Transport Officer	Semi-structured interview with maps	Notes
Anon.	London Borough of Newham	Senior Planning officer	Semi-structured interview with maps	Audio recording and transcription

## Appendix A: List of interviewees

David Sharpe	Allies and Morrison Architects	Architectural Assistant	Urban walk and discussion	Notes
Sandra Jones	N/A	Resident of Stratford	Home visit and discussion	Notes
Ross Butler	N/A	Resident of Hackney Wick	Canal boat tour and discussion	Notes
Anon.	N/A	Activist, E15 Mothers	Local walk and discussion	Notes
Simon Vincent	Plaistow South Big Local	Community Development Co-ordinator	Email correspondence	N/A
Paul Sadler	Thames Water	Senior Project Engineer	Email correspondence	N/A
Graeme Sutherland	Adams and Sutherland	Director	Email correspondence	N/A

## Appendix B: List of policy documents

List of documents analysed or consulted			
Title	Author	Year	Scope
Greenway Vision Study	Adams and Sutherland Architects	2010	Integrated vision for development of the Jubilee Greenway in Newham
Newham Core Strategy	London Borough of Newham	2012	Local development plan
LLDC Local Plan	London Legacy Development Corporation	2014	Local development plan
Your Sustainability Guide to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park 2030	London Legacy Development Corporation	2012	Environmental sustainability policy plan
The London Plan	Mayor of London	2011	Metropolitan scale spatial plan for Greater London
Alterations to the London Plan	Mayor of London	2014	Metropolitan scale spatial plan for Greater London
The National Planning Policy Framework	Department for Communities and Local Government	2012	National guidance for sub-national planning authorities in England
The Localism Act	HM Government	2011	Act of parliament

<b>Other documents consulted</b>			
Stitching the Fringe: working around the Olympic Park	Design for London	2012	Portfolio of urban design interventions
Green infrastructure and open environments: the all London green grid. Supplementary planning guidance	Mayor of London	2012	Strategic spatial planning policy for greenspace across Greater London

## Appendix C: IMD data

Index of Multiple Deprivation by London borough (2011) by alphabetical order<sup>726</sup>.

Source:

<b>Local Authority District name (2013)</b>	<b>IMD - Average rank</b>	<b>IMD - Rank of average rank</b>	<b>IMD - Average score</b>	<b>IMD - Rank of average score</b>	<b>IMD - Proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally</b>	<b>IMD - Rank of proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally</b>
City of London	11769.0	226	13.6	231	0.0	200
Barking and Dagenham	26045.9	3	34.6	12	0.0	137
Barnet	15235.3	157	17.8	172	0.0	189
Bexley	13505.2	195	16.2	191	0.0	200
Brent	21519.9	39	26.7	68	0.1	100
Bromley	12023.4	220	15.2	208	0.0	154
Camden	19916.9	69	25.0	84	0.1	131
Croydon	19008.4	91	23.6	96	0.0	158
Ealing	19304.1	87	23.6	99	0.0	143
Enfield	20771.4	53	27.0	64	0.1	82
Greenwich	20887.1	50	25.5	78	0.0	173
Hackney	26066.0	2	35.3	11	0.2	49

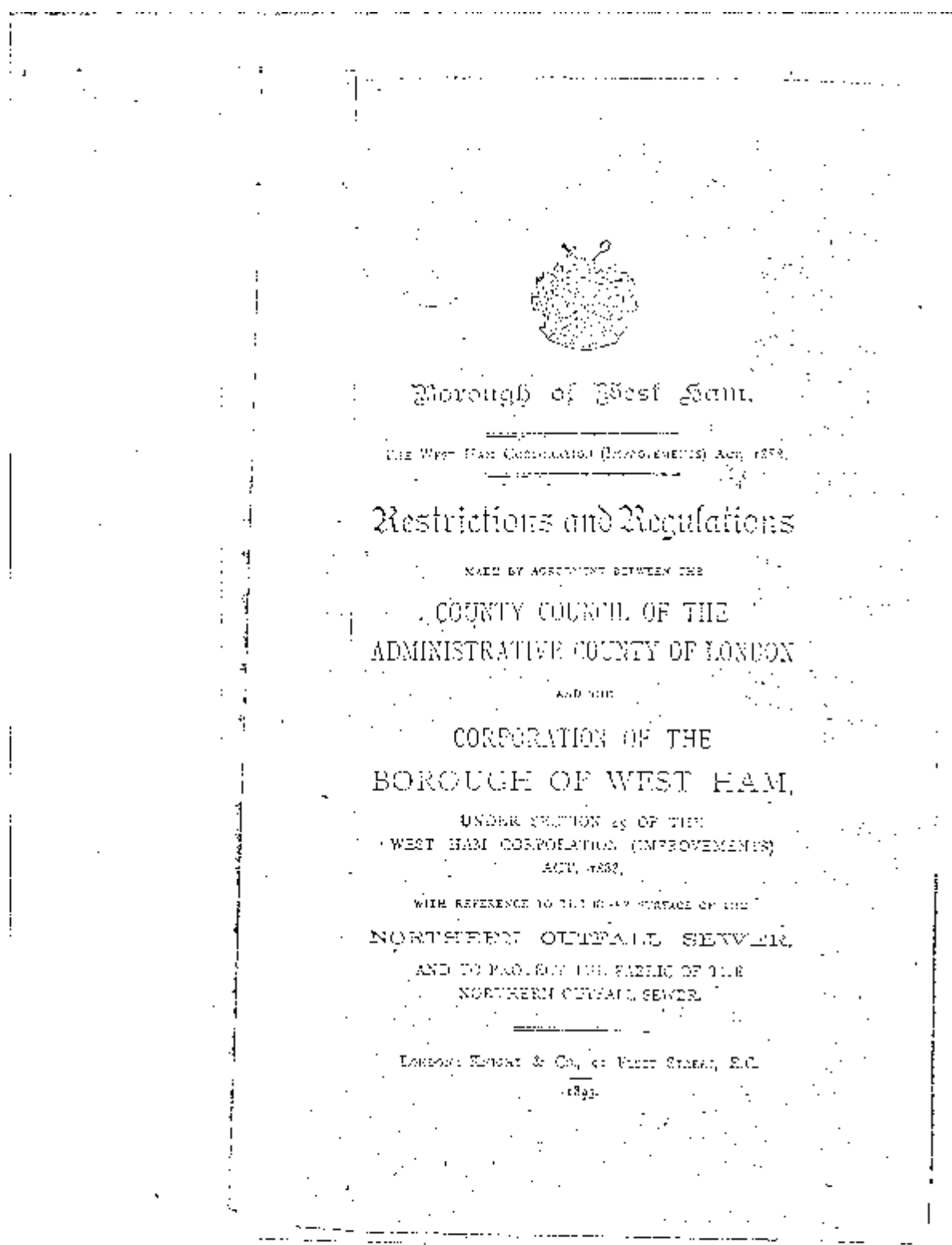
<sup>726</sup> HM Government.

## Appendix C: IMD data

Hammersmith and Fulham	19835.8	76	24.4	92	0.1	117
Haringey	23053.3	21	31.0	30	0.2	44
Harrow	12509.7	213	14.3	219	0.0	200
Havering	14990.9	166	17.9	167	0.0	195
Hillingdon	15409.4	153	18.1	162	0.0	200
Hounslow	19324.7	86	22.5	117	0.0	182
Islington	24687.4	13	32.5	24	0.1	61
Kensington and Chelsea	18551.5	99	23.4	104	0.1	84
Kingston upon Thames	9361.5	278	11.1	278	0.0	200
Lambeth	23004.2	22	28.9	44	0.1	113
Lewisham	22695.1	26	28.6	48	0.0	136
Merton	12597.1	212	14.9	213	0.0	200
Newham	25360.0	8	32.9	23	0.1	103
Redbridge	17495.5	119	20.2	138	0.0	196
Richmond upon Thames	8109.9	296	10.0	294	0.0	200
Southwark	22982.7	23	29.5	40	0.0	135
Sutton	12063.6	217	14.6	215	0.0	194
Tower Hamlets	25486.4	6	35.7	10	0.2	24
Waltham Forest	23744.5	15	30.2	35	0.1	89
Wandsworth	15774.7	147	18.3	158	0.0	197

Westminster	21304.4	43	27.7	57	0.1	64
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## Appendix D: Original Greenway access documents





THE WEST HAM CORPORATION (IMPROVEMENTS) ACT 1888 AND THE

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT 1875

LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM

AND

THAMES WATER AUTHORITY

AMENDMENT TO RESTRICTION AND REGULATION 5 OF THE RESTRICTIONS  
AND REGULATIONS MADE IN RESPECT OF THE USE OF THE UPPER  
SURFACE OF THE NORTHERN OUTFALL SEWER UNDER SECTION 45 OF THE  
WEST HAM CORPORATION (IMPROVEMENTS) ACT 1888 AND THE PUBLIC  
HEALTH ACT 1875

THIS DEED is made the *ninth* day of  
*August* One thousand nine hundred and eighty-four  
BETWEEN THE MAYOR AND BURGESSES OF THE LONDON BOROUGH  
OF NEWHAM of Town Hall East Ham London E6 2RP (hereinafter  
called "the Council") of the one part and THAMES WATER  
AUTHORITY of New River Head Rosebery Avenue London EC1R 4TP  
(hereinafter called "the Authority") of the other part

WHEREAS:-

- (1) By virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 all the undertaking of the Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of West Ham was transferred to and became vested in the Council
- (2) By virtue of Section 254 of the Local Government Act 1972 as extended by the Water Act 1973 Articles 8 and 93 of the Local Authorities (England)(Property etc) Order 1973 (SI1973 No.1861) and Articles 4(1)4 and 18(c)(vii) and (viii) of the Local Authorities etc (England)(Property etc Further Provision) Order 1974 (SI1974 No.404) the public sewers and sewage disposal